ANTEPARTUM HAEMORRHAGE
(EXCLUDING PLACENTA PRAEVIA)

INTRODUCTION

Obstetric haemorrhage (both antepartum and postpartum) is one of the leading causes of maternal/perinatal morbidity and mortality in the developed world. Women who have an antepartum haemorrhage (APH) are at significant risk of a postpartum haemorrhage (PPH). APH complicates 2-5% of all pregnancies.

DEFINITION

APH is defined as any bleeding from the genital tract after the 20th week of gestation but before the onset of labour. Some of the causes of APH might also cause Intrapartum bleeding for example placental abruption or placenta praevia. See ‘Placenta Praevia and Placenta Accreta Guideline’ (GLM0002).

BACKGROUND

Women experiencing an APH require prompt assessment, identification of the underlying cause and appropriate resuscitation/response reflecting the maternal and fetal condition. Blood loss is often underestimated as the loss may be concealed within the uterus. Women who are otherwise healthy are able to compensate for acute loss without overt signs/symptoms of shock until sudden and rapid deterioration. In severe cases a multidisciplinary approach is vital including the Obstetrician, Midwife, Anaesthetist, Neonatologist and Haematologist.

CAUSES

See Appendix 1 - Diagnosis of APH table
MANAGEMENT

Consultation as per Section 88 Referral Guideline.

If a woman presents to a primary unit – stabilise, consult and transfer to the tertiary unit as soon as possible.

See Appendix 2 for initial management.

TIMING OF BIRTH

The timing of birth must weigh the risks of the maternal condition and prematurity against those of continuing the pregnancy.

Consider:

- Gestational age
- Fetal condition.
- Severity of abruption – blood loss, clinical signs and symptoms of haemorrhagic shock along with features of concealed blood loss such as abdominal pain and tenderness.
- Co-existent conditions such as pre-eclampsia, placental insufficiency or IUGR.
- If abruption is confirmed:
  - Greater than 36+0 weeks gestation, even if bleeding appears to be minimal, delivery is recommended due to the risk of further, possibly catastrophic abruption.
  - Between 32 - 35+6 weeks' gestation conservative management can be considered for minor placental abruptions with no evidence of fetal compromise
  - Below 32 weeks gestation, conservative management may be considered, even in the presence of substantive revealed bleeding or significant uterine tenderness unless evidence of maternal or fetal compromise.
- If there is evidence of fetal compromise or coagulopathy birth should be expedited
MODE OF BIRTH

If the abruption is significant but the woman is stable and the CTG normal, then vaginal birth can be attempted. Continuous electronic fetal heart rate monitoring is indicated, (see Fetal Heart Monitoring Guideline-GLM0010) as is the availability of blood products in the event of catastrophic bleeding. Due to the significant risk of postpartum haemorrhage active management of the third stage of labour- including the use of an oxytocin infusion is indicated.

If there is evidence of maternal or fetal compromise, delivery should take place promptly, with concurrent stabilisation. This is usually by category one caesarean section unless vaginal birth is imminent and can be achieved safely. This may involve activation of the Massive Transfusion Protocol (Fluid and Medication Policy, Volume 12 Ref. 4725). Assess the placenta for pathological features and send for histological assessment. See ‘Histological examination of the Placenta guideline’ (GLM0031).

DOCUMENTATION

- MEOWS (C280012 / Ref. 6962)
- Fluid balance chart (C280020A / Ref. 887)
- ED Presentation for Women 20 Weeks Plus Pregnant Pathway (C240335 / Ref. 6508)

REFERENCES

6. RCOG, Greentop Guideline 63. Antepartum Haemorrhage
### Appendix 1 - Diagnosis of APH

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Diagnosis</th>
<th>Presentation</th>
<th>Uterus</th>
<th>Risks to the Fetus</th>
<th>Maternal Risk factors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cervical and lower genital tract bleeding – 45%</td>
<td>Heavy show, Cervical lesions/polyps, trauma, carcinoma, ectropion, vaginal tumours, vulval/vaginal varices Maybe spontaneous or following sexual intercourse or clinical examination. Haematuria, anal or rectal bleeding to be excluded.</td>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>Rarely affected</td>
<td>Cervical pathology, Genital tract infections, Domestic violence/sexual assault</td>
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<tr>
<td>Placenta praevia (link to GLM0002) 30%</td>
<td>Painless PV bleeding, high presenting part/transverse lie, maternal shock</td>
<td>Non-tender and soft. Irritable uterus</td>
<td>Prematurity Dependent on amount of blood loss</td>
<td>Large placental area, low lying placenta on antenatal USS, previous uterine surgery e.g. LSCS, manual removal of placenta, fibroids IUGR, advanced maternal age, high parity.</td>
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<td>Placental abruption 25%</td>
<td>PV bleeding may be concealed/revealed/mixed. Constant abdominal pain (may also be painless). Maternal shock/collapse Back pain from a normally situated placenta. May present as IUFD.</td>
<td>Tender/woody/hard uterus. Irritable uterus</td>
<td>Dependent on amount blood loss and pre-existing co-morbidities. Normal or abnormal CTG Fetal demise</td>
<td>Previous abruption Sudden reduction in size of over distended uterus. Prolonged rupture of membranes. Chorioamnionitis Pre-eclampsia/high BP IUGR, Substance abuse, Smoking Abdominal trauma/MVA Advanced maternal age, Grand multiparity Thrombophilia ECV, Domestic violence/assault</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uterine rupture</td>
<td>Bleeding (may be concealed) Sudden onset of constant sharp abdominal pain Very high presenting part Maternal shock</td>
<td>Contractions may stop Peritonism</td>
<td>Likely to be abnormal FHR</td>
<td>Previous uterine surgery Parity 4 or greater Trauma Oxytocin infusion Domestic violence/assault</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vasa praevia - rare</td>
<td>PV blood loss after rupture of membranes No maternal shock Acute fetal compromise Vessel may be palpable on vaginal examination</td>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>Acute fetal compromise bradycardia/sinusoidal CTG trace</td>
<td>Low-lying placenta Succenturiate lobe/ bipartite placenta Velamentous insertion of cord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclassified bleeding</td>
<td>Often painless Circumvallate placenta</td>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>Perinatal morbidity and mortality if associated with preterm birth</td>
<td>IUGR Abruption, preterm birth, preterm rupture of membranes.</td>
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### Diagnosis of APH

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  - Maybe spontaneous or following sexual intercourse or clinical examination. Haematuria, anal or rectal bleeding to be excluded.
  - Normal
  - Rarely affected
  - Cervical pathology, Genital tract infections, Domestic violence/sexual assault

- **Placenta praevia (link to GLM0002) 30%**
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  - Non-tender and soft. Irritable uterus
  - Prematurity
  - Dependent on amount of blood loss
  - Large placental area, low lying placenta on antenatal USS, previous uterine surgery e.g. LSCS, manual removal of placenta, fibroids IUGR, advanced maternal age, high parity.

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  - Previous abruption Sudden reduction in size of over distended uterus. Prolonged rupture of membranes. Chorioamnionitis Pre-eclampsia/high BP IUGR, Substance abuse, Smoking Abdominal trauma/MVA Advanced maternal age, Grand multiparity Thrombophilia ECV, Domestic violence/assault

- **Uterine rupture**
  - Bleeding (may be concealed) Sudden onset of constant sharp abdominal pain Very high presenting part Maternal shock
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  - Normal
  - Acute fetal compromise bradycardia/sinusoidal CTG trace
  - Low-lying placenta Succenturiate lobe/ bipartite placenta Velamentous insertion of cord

- **Unclassified bleeding**
  - Often painless Circumvallate placenta
  - Normal
  - Perinatal morbidity and mortality if associated with preterm birth
  - IUGR Abruption, preterm birth, preterm rupture of membranes.
### Appendix 2 - Management of APH in a Tertiary unit

Response should be appropriate to the degree of compromise to mother or fetus

- Assess woman’s general condition using ABC approach.
- Monitor vital signs and document on MEOWS chart, estimate blood loss.
- If women hemodynamically unstable, call for help, establish an airway, administer O₂ therapy or assist ventilation @ 15lt/s per minute, 2 x 16 gauge leuors and commence 2000mls crystalloid.
- Activate the Massive Transfusion Protocol (Ref. 4725).
- Send urgent bloods for CBC, clotting, U&E, LFT, Fibrinogen, Kleihauer (if RH negative), group and X match minimum 4 units. Fibrinogen levels rise in pregnancy so normal or low levels and prolonged prothrombin time suggest Disseminated Intravascular Coagulation (DIC).
- Early involvement of Consultant Obstetrician, Anaesthetist, Neonatologist and Haematologist is advised.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Restoration of circulating blood volume</th>
<th>Ongoing treatment for minor APH</th>
<th>Fetal considerations</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past medical, obstetric, gynaecological surgical history including any bleeding in the current pregnancy. EDD, review USS reports, if in doubt perform USS to identify placental location. Amount of blood loss including colour, and consistency - weigh sanitary pads. Abdominal examination noting pain, fundal height, contractions, tone, lie, guarding and fetal parts palpable. Auscultate fetal heart – continuous CTG if ≥ 28 weeks <em>(Fetal Heart Monitoring - GLM0010)</em> or hand held Doppler if ≤ 28 weeks. Enquire about fetal movements. Vaginal examination using speculum only to assess site/amount of bleeding/cervical dilatation. Do not perform a digital examination before excluding placenta praevia/vasa praevia. Any provoking incident e.g. trauma/sexual intercourse/MVA.</td>
<td>Establish IV access with 2 x 16 gauge cannulas. Send bloods as directed above. (for minor APH consider if appropriate to place 2 x cannulas and send group and hold). Commence crystalloid fluid replacement of 2000mls. Insert IDC with urometer and record urine output hourly on fluid balance chart C280020A. Output should remain ≥30mls per hour. If blood transfusion required consider consultation with Haematologist regarding the appropriate therapy.</td>
<td>Admit for assessment and ongoing observation. If minor APH and/or minor provoking incident, once initial bleeding has abated and fetal monitoring is reassuring the women could be discharged and managed according to gestation and diagnosis with the advice to monitor fetal movements. Close fetal surveillance is necessary to identify IUGR and consider fortnightly growth scans if any concerns. Correct and maintain Haemoglobin levels.</td>
<td>Consider corticosteroids if gestation ≤34 weeks. If birth is imminent and the gestation is ≤30 weeks consider Magnesium Sulphate for Neuroprotection in Preterm Births Guideline (GLM0041). Neonatal consultation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternal considerations</td>
<td>Control of bleeding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation for minor APH</td>
<td>Consider mode of delivery. If maternal haemodynamic state can only be improved by delivery this should be considered irrespective of gestational age. See section on “Timing and mode of delivery”. Consider cell salvage. Close monitoring of vital signs.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Consultation for minor APH</td>
</tr>
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