

Placental cysts

Patient Information Series – What you should know. what you should ask.

What is a placental cyst?

A placental cyst is a small area in the placenta containing liquified material, usually without any blood flowing to or inside of it. On ultrasound, it appears as a dark area in the placenta. It may be surrounded by a bright white border. Areas that measure less than 1cm across are common, and do not carry any risk.

Why do placental cysts happen?

A placental cyst is usually the result of the breakdown of a material called fibrin in the placenta. This may happen within the body of the placenta, where it has occurred in a part of the placenta belong to the mother called the decidual septa (“decidual septal cyst”), or on the surface of the placenta (“subchorionic or subamniotic cyst”).

What are the things to watch for during the pregnancy?

Cysts that measure less than 5cm and that do not have blood flow to or within them do not cause problems in pregnancy.

Large cysts that measure over 5cm may be related to blood flow problems in the placenta. For this reason, they can lead to problems like a baby that measures small, or high blood pressure in pregnancy. Both conditions may lead to the need to have the baby earlier than your due date. If the cyst is large, your doctor may ask for more ultrasounds in your pregnancy to monitor the baby’s weight, and monitor for high blood pressure.

What does it mean for my baby after it is born?

If the cyst is small, it will most likely have no effect on your baby.

If there is a large placental cyst, or many cysts, the placenta may be sent for analysis after the baby is born. If you have the baby early because of the baby being small or high blood pressure, then your baby may need extra monitoring or care.

Will it happen again?

It is unknown how often a placental cyst is found again in a following pregnancy. If your baby was born small or you had high blood pressure, the placenta may have been sent for analysis, and this may be helpful in determining the risk of these events happening again.

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