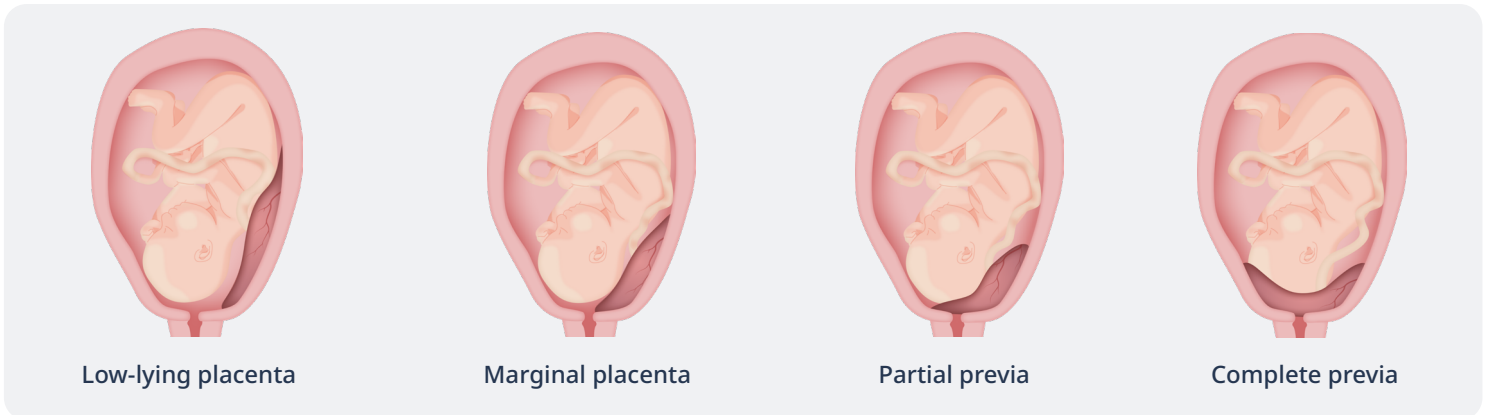




PLACENTA PREVIA



Placenta previa occurs when the placenta implants in the lower uterine segment, rather than the fundus. If the placenta covers the cervix, it blocks the birth canal and presents the risk of life-threatening bleeding when the cervix begins to dilate. Placenta previa is classified by the location of the placenta and the degree to which it covers the cervical os.



Risk factors

- Prior placenta previa
- Prior cesarean section
- Other prior uterine surgery
- Assisted reproductive technology
- Uterine fibroids
- Multiple gestation
- Advanced maternal age
- Grand multiparity
- Smoking
- Cocaine use

Clinical presentation

- Bright red, painless vaginal bleeding in second or third trimester
- Soft, non-contractile uterus
- Fetal distress, if placental perfusion compromised by severe bleeding
- Client with signs of shock, if severe bleeding

Management

Known previa, identified on early pregnancy ultrasound:

- Evaluate for placenta accreta.
- Serial ultrasounds to monitor placental location
- If persistent previa: planned cesarean at 36 to 37 weeks

Painless vaginal bleeding in 2nd or 3rd trimester, no known previa:

- Ultrasound assessment → previa diagnosed
- Evaluate for placenta accreta.
- Initiate serial vital signs and electronic fetal monitoring.
- Insert two large-bore intravenous lines.
- Labs: CBC, coags, type/screen, Kleihauer–Betke test
- Consider steroids for fetal lung maturation and magnesium sulfate for neuroprotection, depending on gestational age and severity of bleeding.
- Cesarean delivery, if severe/persistent bleeding
- May consider expectant management if bleeding subsides and both client and fetal status remain reassuring

Client education

- Seek attention immediately for any episode of vaginal bleeding.
- Pelvic rest; avoid placing anything in vagina, as may disrupt placenta.

CLINICAL TIP

Avoid vaginal exams on any pregnant client with vaginal bleeding until placental location is confirmed. Exam may disrupt placenta and worsen bleeding.