

Miscarriage

- loss before 20 weeks (five months) of pregnancy
- happens in one out of every six pregnancies
- may happen suddenly without warning, but can happen slowly

What happens when you miscarry?

Each miscarriage is different and doesn't fit a special pattern. A miscarriage is a very premature birth. The pain you feel during a miscarriage may be similar to childbirth. You may spot, bleed, or have cramps. The amount of bleeding may scare you. If you are worried, it is important that you go to emergency at the nearest hospital and/or call your doctor's office. Sometimes tissue may need to be removed to prevent infection or further bleeding. You may need medication for that. Afterward, you may need to have extra fluids that will be given through an intravenous needle. You may also have pain, if so don't be afraid to ask for something to help.

What happens to your body after a miscarriage?

After a miscarriage, the body takes weeks to return to normal. Besides your emotional reactions, you will also have hormonal responses. Your body will go through the same changes as you would with a full-term delivery. You may have mood swings, difficulty concentrating and sleeping, tire more easily than usual, and/or feel irritable. Your appetite and energy levels may change.

- You can usually go back to your normal daily work unless told otherwise by your doctor.
- Do not douche, use a tampon, or have intercourse for at least a week.



- You can expect some bleeding or staining for a week or more.
- If you are not allergic, you can take Acetaminophen (Tylenol®) every 3-4 hours for low abdominal pain.
- Your breasts may be tender and your milk may come in. Wear a support bra if your breasts are uncomfortable.
- Cramping may continue for several days.

When should you call your doctor?

Call your doctor if you have:

- heavy bleeding
- bleeding that increases or continues for several weeks
- bleeding that turns bright red
- a discharge that has a bad odour or is yellow or green
- a fever (more than 38°C or 100°F), pelvic pain or unusual cramping

What are your chances of having another miscarriage?

Losing a pregnancy usually doesn't mean that you can't have more children. It also doesn't mean that there is something wrong with your health. In a small number of women who have more than one miscarriage, there may be medical reasons which may require investigation by your doctor.

What can you expect after a miscarriage?

The loss of a pregnancy often involves more than a physical loss of a baby. There may be many ways to react to a miscarriage. You may feel very upset or have little reaction.

You may feel . . .

- Shock
- Confusion
- Low self-esteem
- Denial
- Guilt and/or self-blame
- Frustration
- Relief
- Sadness and/or depression
- Physical symptoms related to hormone changes

Is grief normal after a miscarriage?

It is as normal not to be upset as it is to be very upset by a miscarriage. There is a wide range of feelings after a miscarriage. Some feel sad and are hurt by others who do not think they should feel so sad. Others may feel little sadness. Emotional healing is as important as physical healing. There is no right or wrong way to move through your feelings.

Helpful Hints

- Take care of yourself, don't expect too much
- Allow yourself to grieve, if grief is what you feel
- Exercise
- Eat well
- Cut down or stop smoking
- Cut down or stop drinking alcohol
- Keep a journal
- Consider a memorial, e.g., plant a tree



- Talk with others who have had a similar experience
- Read books and literature about miscarriage
- Talk with your partner, family and friends
- Don't make major decisions
- Get enough rest
- Consider counselling if you plan to get pregnant again.

What about your partner/family?

Your partner and family may also be upset. They may not be able to tell you how they are feeling because they are in pain and feel sad. Often, they may feel left out, helpless, powerless and useless. They may also feel angry, guilty or frustrated because they don't know how to help.

It may be hard for someone who has never lost a baby to understand what you are going through. Often, people do not know what to say to you. When trying to make you feel better they may say things that upset you or make you angry. Most people do not want to be insensitive; they just do not understand the impact the miscarriage has had on you.

The best way to deal with people is to be honest and tell them what you need. Instead of saying, "You just don't understand how I feel!" say, "I'm having a bad day, and it really hurts my feelings when you say things like that."

Where can you get help?

Other than your health care provider, partner, close friends, and family, there are other people willing to help you. For some, clergy can be a great comfort. You can also find on-line organizations designed to help grieving parents.

Suggested Reading

Empty Cradle/Broken Heart: Surviving the Death of Your Baby. Deborah Davis (1996). ISBN 1-155591-0302-4. Fulcrum Publications.

When Men Grieve: Why Men Grieve Differently & How You Can Help. Elizabeth Levang. (1998). ISBN 1-57749-078-9. Fairview Press.

Trying Again: A Guide to Pregnancy After Miscarriage, Stillbirth and Infant Loss. (2000). Ann Douglas & John R. Sussman. ISBN 0-87833-182-4. Taylor Trade Publishing.

Internet:

- ▶ www.nationalshare.org
- ▶ www.aplacetoremember.com
(Information Pamphlets)

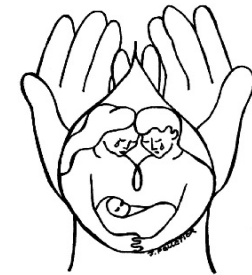
Your library, Family Resource Centre or Public Health Nursing office may have books and videos for you to borrow.

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Early Pregnancy Loss (Miscarriage)



For those who have had an early pregnancy loss

