

Miscarriage - information and support

Suffering a miscarriage can be a very sad, scary or lonely experience. This section of our site is designed to answer questions and provide support to you through this difficult time.

A miscarriage is the loss of a pregnancy during the first 24 weeks.

Miscarriages are often referred to as early or late.

What is early miscarriage?

An early miscarriage is one that happens in the first trimester (until 13 weeks of pregnancy). After 13 weeks, the risk of miscarriage drops.

Early miscarriages are more common than you may realise, often occurring before the mother even realises she is pregnant. Many early losses happen to mothers who simply assume the bleeding is a normal period.

How common is miscarriage?

Miscarriage is more common than people realise. Up to 1 in 4 women will experience a miscarriage in their lifetime. Many miscarriages are unreported and some go unnoticed as it happens so soon. Among women who know they are pregnant, it is estimated that 1 in 6 pregnancies end in miscarriage.

After a miscarriage

Recovering from a miscarriage can be tough, so look for support from those close to you, and from your doctor.

The unit that you are seen at will probably give you some leaflets about the experience of having a miscarriage and they may have information about local support groups. Some women prefer to take time to recover, others want to get back to normal life as soon as possible, but follow advice about rest to give your body the chance to recover. Before you leave the hospital ask your doctors how long you should take off work, and ask for a certificate if you need one for your employer.

Emotional recovery after miscarriage

Getting over a miscarriage can be very difficult. From the moment you found out you were pregnant you were likely to be making plans for the future and imagining how you would be as a mother or father. You may have thought about the sex of the baby and possible names, you may have thought about moving home or planning nurseries and even childcare.

It can be a huge shock to lose the baby and you may feel very alone, and even disappointed by your body. Women often experience the same cycle of emotions as anyone who has lost a close relative or friend; denial, anger, guilt, feelings of emptiness and longing.

Talk to the people who support you best. Be prepared to give each other space and time to grieve and don't expect each other to 'move on' or 'get over it' at the same time. If, after some time, you feel you are not coping with your feelings then do seek help. You may need more support such as professional counselling. See your GP if you need more help.

Some families choose to have a memorial service or write in a book of remembrance at the hospital. You can ask to see the hospital chaplain for more information about this. If you suffered a late miscarriage you may be able to see and hold your tiny baby – ask the hospital staff if this is possible. Some women have found it helpful to write letters to the baby, or to themselves, really writing out how they feel.

Give yourselves time to grieve

Miscarriage can be physically painful but for many couples the emotional fallout is far more overwhelming. You may both feel low for some time and may find it difficult to come to terms with the loss of your baby. Don't bottle up your feelings: try to express how you feel to each other or a close friend. Sometimes, talking to your GP or a bereavement counsellor can help you to understand and accept your loss. A study has shown that this can have a significantly beneficial effect on your feelings. You may simply want someone to acknowledge what you're going through and that your dreams have been shattered. A few kind words can go a long way.

Benefits and entitlements

Unfortunately, if your baby dies before 24 completed weeks of pregnancy (known as a late miscarriage), you're not entitled to maternity benefits.

This includes Statutory Maternity Pay, Sure Start Maternity Grant and additional Healthy Start vouchers.

If you're an employee, you're entitled to Statutory Sick Pay and you should be able to get compassionate leave.