

Patient Information

Miscarriage: What You Need to Know

A miscarriage is the loss of a pregnancy before 20 weeks of gestation. It is a common and often distressing event that affects up to 1 in 5 pregnancies. Most miscarriages happen in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy.

What are the signs and symptoms of a miscarriage?

The most common signs and symptoms of a miscarriage are vaginal bleeding and cramping lower abdominal pains. Sometimes, there are no symptoms at all and the miscarriage is diagnosed by ultrasound scan.

How is a miscarriage diagnosed?

A combination of symptoms, examination findings, ultrasound and blood tests will confirm whether you have had, or you are having, a miscarriage. A miscarriage can be classified as complete, incomplete or missed.

How is a miscarriage treated?

If you have had a complete miscarriage, you do not need any further treatment. If you have an incomplete or missed miscarriage, you have a few options to help your body pass the pregnancy tissue:

- Expectant management: This means waiting for your body to pass the tissue naturally.
- Medical management: This means taking medication (usually Mifepristone and Misoprostol) to

make your uterus contract and expel the tissue.

- Surgical management: This means having a minor operation (suction curettage or dilatation and curettage) to remove the tissue from your uterus.

All methods of treatment are safe and effective, but they have different success/failure rates and advantages and disadvantages. You should discuss with your doctor which option is best for you.

How will I feel after a miscarriage?

Having a miscarriage can be very upsetting and stressful. You may experience a range of emotions such as sadness, anger, guilt, shock, disbelief and relief. These feelings are normal and may change over time. Everyone grieves differently and there is no right or wrong way to cope.

You may find it helpful to talk to someone who understands what you are going through, such as your partner, family, friends or health care professional. You may also benefit from joining a support group or counselling service that can offer you emotional support and information.

When can I try for another pregnancy?

There is no right time to try for another pregnancy after a miscarriage. Some couples need time to heal and adjust, while others want to try again as soon as possible. It is advised that you wait until after your next



period before trying again, as this makes it easier to date your next pregnancy.

If you do not wish to conceive again in the near future, you should use contraception until you are ready.

When should I seek help?

If you have chosen expectant or medical management, or you are waiting for surgical management, you should go to your nearest emergency department if you have any of the following:

- Severe pain that is not relieved by painkillers
- Heavy bleeding (more than one pad per hour)
- Feeling faint or fainting
- Fever (temperature more than 37.8°C)

In a medical emergency, call an ambulance (dial 000) or go to the nearest hospital.

For other medical problems, see your GP or health care professional.

To learn more about miscarriage and support service available for families, you can visit the following links:

1. <https://www.sands.org.au/>
2. <https://miscarriageaustralia.com.au/>

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