

After Miscarriage

You will normally bleed for up to 10 days while your uterus heals. In order to prevent infection during this time it is important to use sanitary pads (not tampons), avoid intercourse and shower instead of bathing. Do not use spa pools or swimming pools.

If you were more than 13 weeks pregnant your breasts may temporarily produce milk.

Use contraception when resuming sex as you can conceive as soon as 14 days after miscarrying.

See your medical professional for a check up when bleeding is finished. It is important to have a medical record of your miscarriage.

If you have bleeding that lasts longer than 2 weeks, pain or your temperature rises, this may indicate infection or incomplete miscarriage. See your LMC or go to an emergency clinic.

Feelings

Miscarriage is both the birth and death of a baby and will usually be followed by grief. Everybody reacts differently, and we encourage you to accept your feelings whatever they are. It is the strength of the bond with your baby, not the pregnancy length that determines the intensity of your grief.

You may feel numb for a while, then sad, angry, and guilty. Confusion and emotional isolation are also common and your self esteem can plummet.

These are all healthy, normal responses to grief. The use of drugs or alcohol to escape the pain only slows down the process. Unexpressed grief always has repercussions, often in unrecognised ways. Do not let others minimize or invalidate your feelings.

Many women are surprised how strong their feelings are, especially those who did not plan their pregnancy. Some feel they are going mad.

Thinking about your baby, talking with others, writing down your thoughts, drawing your feelings and crying are all good ways to release grief.

Completion

Although there are no legal obligations, we recommend naming your baby and having a farewell ceremony to help the grief process. Some find comfort in a memento or planting a tree as a

symbolic baby bond. Although you never forget, healthy grieving is usually completed by 6 months.

Partners

Often they do not share our feelings of bonding and grief and may find the feelings they do have difficult to express. If this causes friction it is important to discuss and accept these differences. A lack of communication can damage relationships.

Subsequent Pregnancies

Chances that your next pregnancy will be successful only drop by 5%. For accurate dating as well as your physical recovery it is recommended to have at least 3 periods before trying again. This also gives you time to complete your grieving. Re-current miscarriers need to get tests done ASAP.

Support and Information

For support, use our bulletin board, email or Supportline (talk to a pregnancy loss counsellor). Many people who have not experienced miscarriage may find it difficult to understand why you are so upset or taking so long to get over it. With the best intentions they may urge you to get on with things or suggest sedatives. Explain you are mourning a death. Perhaps you could give them this pamphlet to help them understand. It is also printed in **Samoan, Tongan, Chinese & Maori**. Please order by email or phone our office number. Visit our comprehensive 80 page website for more information – we cover all aspects of miscarriage.

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Understanding

Miscarriage



If you think miscarriage is a lonely experience, join the crowd.

Miscarriage is not talked about much, but it is a very common event. Approximately one in four pregnancies end this way.

This pamphlet outlines some of the reasons miscarriage occurs, what to do during and afterwards and how it may affect you.

Miscarriage Support Auckland Inc.
(a not-for-profit organisation)

Miscarriage is a pregnancy that ends spontaneously before 20 weeks and the baby dies. 90% of miscarriages occur in the first 13 weeks of pregnancy. The chance of miscarrying your first pregnancy is greater than later ones.

Why Miscarriages Happen

Unfortunately most women never discover the reason they miscarried. (see www.miscarriagesupport.org.nz)

Some possible causes of miscarriage are;

- ♥ The most common (50%) is a chromosomal problem.
- ♥ The embryo may implant in the wrong place.
- ♥ Something may be wrong with the placenta.
- ♥ Exposure to environmental chemical pollution.
- ♥ Endometriosis, Hypothyroidism, Diabetes.
- ♥ Alcohol, cigarettes, caffeine and recreational drugs are linked to higher rates of miscarriage.
- ♥ The mother's immune system or hormone levels may affect the pregnancy. She may be sick, badly injured, stressed, under-nourished at conception, have an unusual shaped womb, older eggs (be over 35), a weak cervix or still have an intrauterine contraceptive device (IUCD) inside the uterus or have an infection there.

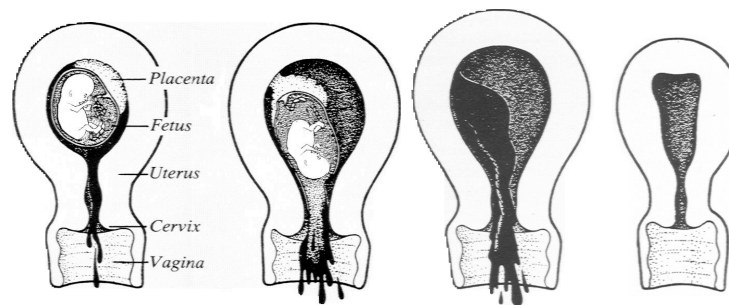
When you have a non-viable pregnancy, nothing can be done to save it. You can be certain your miscarriage was not caused by bending, stretching, carrying heavy weights, exercising or having sex, otherwise there would be many more.

What Happens During a Miscarriage

The foetus, placenta and blood from the uterus leave the body through the vagina. This can happen quickly or over a period of time. Exactly which symptoms you experience depends on the cause of your miscarriage and the stage of your pregnancy. By the time bleeding begins your baby may have already died.

Types of Miscarriage

1. Missed miscarriage You may have no warning symptoms and discover during a routine scan that there is no heartbeat or an empty foetal sac (called a blighted ovum).



Threatening

Inevitable

Incomplete

Complete

2. Threatening miscarriage may be experienced for days or even weeks before you lose the baby. If you have any of these symptoms tell your medical professional;

- ♥ light bleeding
- ♥ pain similar to period pain
- ♥ the nausea and tender breasts associated with pregnancy have disappeared
- ♥ a sense of no longer 'feeling pregnant.'

If there is no pain it is probably just spotting at the time your next period would have been due. The pregnancy will continue as normal without harming the baby at all.

3. Inevitable miscarriage is when the cervix opens and the placenta breaks free from the uterine wall. The most common signs are:

- ♥ bleeding is heavy
- ♥ pain is like bad period pain or birth contractions
- ♥ faintness and nausea
- ♥ passing pieces of placenta which look like blood clots and possibly an offensive discharge
- ♥ feeling shivery or unwell

If your miscarriage is due to an incompetent cervix, [from 16 weeks on] it usually happens very quickly and your baby may be born alive.

4. Incomplete miscarriage occurs when some pregnancy tissue remains in the uterus, most commonly between 6 & 12 weeks. Depending on your LMC's diagnosis you could be referred to hospital where each have their own policy and could require/offer 1) a scan 2) wait & see monitoring 3) tablets to induce normal delivery

- this is monitored and can require a return to hospital 4) a dilation and curettage (D&C) operation involving a general anaesthetic for your cervix to be opened and your uterus cleared - this will require a stay in hospital afterwards for a few hours.

5. Complete miscarriage If the baby has been passed, you will only need monitoring. Once the uterus is empty the cervix closes, the pain stops, bleeding slows and should end by 10 days.

Ectopic Pregnancy

This is a pregnancy growing in the wrong place, usually in the fallopian tubes. **Contact your med. professional or emergency services urgently if you have any of the following symptoms;**

- ♥ stomach pains that do not feel like period pains
- ♥ pain in the shoulder associated with them
- ♥ there may be unexpected vaginal bleeding

This is a dangerous situation and the pregnancy must be treated immediately to save your life.

What You Should Do If You Are Miscarrying

Unfortunately no intervention can save your baby but you will still need medical help.

- ♥ Take your usual pain relief when needed and lie down placing a hot water-bottle on your stomach. If you have no bleeding or only a moderate to small amount see your medical professional within 24 hours.
- ♥ If bleeding becomes heavy (soaking pads every half hour) save everything you pass in a clean container as testing may find a cause for your miscarriage. You can request everything back for burial should you wish it.
- ♥ Soak up the blood with sanitary pads or even towels, not tampons. Keep a count of how many you use for the doctor's records.
- ♥ As you may need a D&C, do not eat or drink. Your stomach must be empty for the anaesthetic.
- ♥ Pack a bag for hospital in case it is needed.
- ♥ Have someone drive you to an emergency service.
- ♥ **If you are alone dial 111 for an ambulance. Do not drive if you are having a miscarriage.**