

Having a miscarriage

This information sheet aims to answer some commonly asked questions about having a miscarriage

IMPORTANT: This is general information only. Ask your doctor, midwife or nurse about what care is right for you.

What is a miscarriage?

A miscarriage is the loss of a baby before the 20th week of pregnancy. Most miscarriages happen before the 12th week of pregnancy. Some women have a miscarriage before they know they're pregnant. The exact cause of a miscarriage is often not known.

What happens during a miscarriage?

After going over your symptoms, your history, your scans and all your blood test results, your healthcare provider may tell you that sadly, there is no hope of the pregnancy continuing.

What happens next depends on your individual situation. There are three options. Talk about them with your healthcare provider to help you decide which one is right for you.

How much pain is normal?

Mild pain (similar to period pain) and cramping is normal during and after a miscarriage.

If the pain does not improve with simple methods of pain relief, seek help from your healthcare provider.

To help with pain you can:

- take over the counter pain medicines (analgesia) such as paracetamol and/or ibuprofen
- use hot packs or hot water bottles
- gently massage your lower abdomen in a circular motion while sitting on the toilet (this may also help to pass any bloodclots)

THE OPTIONS

Wait and see (expectant)

This is when you wait and see if all the pregnancy passes out of your uterus by itself. This is often like a heavy period. About a week later, you will have another blood test to make sure the pregnancy hormone level (beta hCG) is going down. You may need another ultrasound scan if your bleeding does not settle, or if your hormone level does not go down enough. You can change your mind at any time and have different treatment instead.

Take medication (medical)

This is when you take medication to help pass the pregnancy. You will need more blood tests and may need another ultrasound scan to make sure all of the pregnancy has passed out of your uterus.

An operation (surgical)

This is when you have a procedure in hospital to remove the pregnancy (sometimes called a dilation and curettage or D&C). You do not usually need any further tests or treatment after the procedure.

What is the right option for you?

Sometimes one type of treatment is more suitable for you than another. It can depend on how many weeks pregnant you are, if you are well, if there is any infection, or if some of the pregnancy has already passed from your uterus. Often, you don't have to decide what to do right away.

Talk to your healthcare provider about your circumstances and what is right for you.

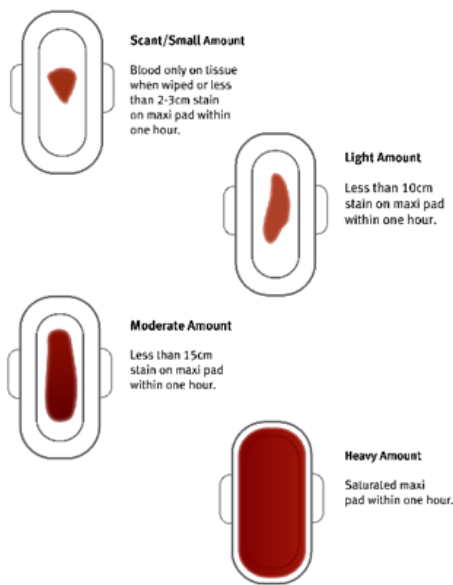


Is bleeding after a miscarriage normal?

Some vaginal bleeding is normal after a miscarriage. The amount of blood and the duration of bleeding is different for everyone. Bleeding usually decreases/slow down over a few weeks. Your next period usually comes around 4 to 6 weeks after the miscarriage. If bleeding is continuous and heavy (more than 3 soaked maxi pads within 3 hours) go and see your healthcare provider urgently.

Normal bleeding can:

- have clots or there may be no clots
- stop and start
- be bright red or brownish in colour
- be a lot or not much



When can you get back to usual activity?

You can usually return to your normal level of activity and exercise as soon as you feel ready. Remember to eat a diet with a wide variety of fruit and vegetables. Take any antibiotics, contraception, or other medicines prescribed for you.

Is breast soreness normal?

Some women have tender or sore breasts after a miscarriage. The further along the pregnancy was, the more likely you are to experience this. You may even have a small amount of milk coming from your breasts. The pregnancy hormones that cause the tenderness and milk production will gradually decrease over a few weeks.

To help with the symptoms you can:

- avoid stimulating your nipples
- wear a firm and supportive bra
- use cold packs on your breasts
- take simple pain medication (e.g. paracetamol or ibuprofen)

When can you have sex again?

Avoid vaginal sex while you are still bleeding (usually about 2 weeks) This can help prevent infection. You can then have sex whenever you feel ready.

When can you start contraception?

You can get pregnant immediately after a miscarriage, so if you are not ready for another pregnancy, start contraception straight away. Talk to your healthcare provider about the type of contraception right for you.

What about having a child in the future?

Having a miscarriage does not affect your ability to get pregnant later on. Most women who have a miscarriage will have a normal pregnancy in the future.

Is it normal to feel sad after a miscarriage?

Women experience a variety of emotions after having a miscarriage and they are all normal. There is no 'right' way to feel. Feelings of relief, elation, sadness, anxiety and depression are common and can last a short or a long time.

If you feel that you need support, or you are struggling to cope, it may be helpful to talk with someone. This may be someone close to you, or you might want to talk with your healthcare provider or a counsellor or contact one of the support groups listed below.

Support & information

Queensland Clinical Guidelines information for parents and families www.health.qld.gov.au/qcg

13HEALTH (13 432584) health information, referral and services to the public by phone www.qld.gov.au/health/contacts/advice/13health

Pregnancy, Birth & Baby Helpline (1800 882 436) (free call) information and counselling on conception, pregnancy, birthing and postnatal care www.health.gov.au/pregnancyhelpline

Lifeline (13 11 14) a telephone crisis support service www.lifeline.org.au

SANDS (1300 308 307) support and information on miscarriage, stillbirth and neonatal and infant death www.sands.org.au

The Pink Elephants Support Network support women through miscarriage, pregnancy loss and beyond. www.miscarriagesupport.org.au

Pregnancy Counselling Link (PCL) a community agency with professional counsellors to support women and partners in pregnancy, parenting, relationships, navigating life changes, fertility issues, and loss and grief www.pcl.org.au