

# A guide to Miscarriage

## How common is a miscarriage?

Miscarriages are sadly a common complication that happen to many women. Up to 1 in 5 women will experience a miscarriage in their lifetime. A miscarriage can be defined as “a loss of pregnancy during the first 23 weeks”.

## What signs and symptoms could I have if I was miscarrying?

Symptoms can vary at the different stages of pregnancy.

- Bleeding can be a sign of having a miscarriage, bleeding can be small spotting or can be dark brown to bright red in colour. It is important to remember that having light bleeding at any stage of pregnancy does not mean you are having a miscarriage.
- Pains are often expressed by cramping in the stomach or in the back.
- Lack or loss of pregnancy symptoms.

In some pregnancies a woman may not have any of these symptoms and a diagnosis would not happen until the routine scan.

If you are worried and if any of these symptoms do occur, please contact your doctor or hospital.

## How can a miscarriage be diagnosed?

A miscarriage can be diagnosed through an ultrasound scan. Sometimes, you may need more than one scan to confirm the diagnosis, and this process may take one to two weeks.

## What happens when I am diagnosed with a miscarriage?

Sometimes there may not be any need for any action to be taken if you have passed the embryo or foetus naturally. If there is any pregnancy tissue remaining there are three approaches that can be taken.

- The ‘wait and see approach’. Some women prefer to take the route of no intervention and will wait for the miscarriage to occur naturally. When a miscarriage takes place, you may feel you have strong pains like a period. Bleeding will occur which can often be heavy. If the bleeding is extremely heavy and severe pain is present, please contact your doctor or hospital.

- *Medical approach* – if the conservative approach is not preferred, you can take a prescribed medication called ‘Misoprostol’ which can be taken with painkillers to start the process. Pain can be expected like a strong period pain and heavy bleeding will initially happen for a few hours. Pain and bleeding should subside after 7-10 days. A follow up scan with your doctor should then take place.
- *Surgical approach* – Surgical Management of Miscarriage (SMOM) is a procedure carried out under general anaesthetic to surgically remove the pregnancy tissue. This is done vaginally without any stitches or cuts.

## Are there any causes of miscarriages?

Most miscarriages are not caused by anything the mother has done. But some things are known to cause a miscarriage.

1. Genetic – When there is an abnormal number of chromosomes present.
2. Certain illnesses – like severe diabetes.
3. Blood clotting – problems in the blood vessels that supply the placenta.
4. Infection – Serious infections or a major injury.
5. Anatomy – If the cervix is weak and if the uterus has an irregular shape.

## What happens after a miscarriage?

Every woman is different, and it may take a few days to a few weeks to recover physically from a miscarriage. Between four and six weeks after a miscarriage most women will get a period which may be heavier and slightly longer than usual.

## How should I tell my workplace about my miscarriage?

You may choose not to tell your employer about your miscarriage and if you are off for more than 7 days you may need your GP to certify you as sick. If you choose to inform your employer of your miscarriage this can be recorded as a pregnancy related sickness.

## What help is available to help me come to terms with my miscarriage?

Losing a baby is a deeply personal and traumatic experience. You may need support to help you and your family overcome what has happened. Our doctors and nurses will help you through this difficult time.

Please contact; ‘The Miscarriage Association’. They have a lot of resources online which are very helpful.

## When can I get pregnant again?

It is common to feel anxious about your pregnancy if you have had a previous miscarriage. It is advised to wait until you have stopped bleeding or recovered from your surgery to start trying again. Evidence has shown that there is a lower risk of miscarriage in women who conceive within the first six months after miscarriage. You may want to talk with your GP or specialist before trying again.

## Summary:

1. Miscarriages are sadly very common and up to 1 in 5 women will experience this.
2. Diagnosis can be done through an ultrasound scan.
3. A miscarriage can be defined as “a loss of pregnancy during the first 23 weeks”.
4. Having a miscarriage is very traumatic and please take time to recover both physically and psychologically.
5. Most miscarriages do not have an underlying cause.

For further information, advice and support please visit [www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk](http://www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk) where you can access a range of support services.

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