



Information About Miscarriage

About 20% of all confirmed pregnancies will end in miscarriage. The majority is due to problems with early development. A miscarriage can occur suddenly, or take several days (up to a week) to complete.

If a miscarriage happens spontaneously at home, the pain is like strong menstrual cramps, and should greatly decrease within an hour of passing of the pregnancy tissue. Regular or extra strength Tylenol is fine to use, and if this is not sufficient, the doctor can prescribe other medications to help. A woman should monitor her temperature, and call her doctor for fever. It is helpful to bring any tissue that is passed to the office in a clean plastic bag or jar for the doctor or midwife to examine.

Some miscarriages will require surgical intervention, while others do not. You may be able to make a choice about how to proceed. Treatment may involve a brief operation, where instruments are used to dilate the cervix and remove the contents of the uterus. Though rare, the risks to you if such an operation (called a "D&C") is performed are infection, internal bleeding, perforation of the uterus, and injury to the bowel and/or bladder. You and your doctor or midwife may discuss medications that will be helpful in your case. It is also sometimes possible to do nothing at all, and allow nature to complete the process by itself.

It is very important for a woman with Rh negative blood to receive a dose of Rhogam after a miscarriage, to prevent the formation of antibodies in the woman's blood that can be harmful to future babies she may conceive.

Hormonal changes in a woman's body may make it take longer until the first menstrual period begins after a miscarriage. A woman may experience mood swings, irritability, crying, and feelings of exhaustion. Her breasts may be tender and feel very full for some time (but usually not). It is important to avoid tampons and intercourse until bleeding stops. Bleeding will be like a heavy period during the actual miscarriage, but should subside quickly after all tissue has been passed.

Unless a woman experiences any of the danger signs listed below, she should schedule an appointment to follow up in ____ days.

Some danger signs to be aware of with miscarriage are:

- Immediate bleeding of more than 1-2 maxi pads per hour.
- Persistent heavy bleeding (or passing large clots).
- Temperature of >100.5°F.
- Severe pelvic pain.
- Vaginal discharge that has a foul smell.

Suggestions to help with the grieving process:

- Allow yourself and your partner the time you need to grieve. (No one can say how long this will take—it differs for everyone.)
- Decrease your self-expectations. (Try to avoid making major decisions for now.)
- Stop or decrease tobacco and alcohol intake (these are depressants).
- Eat a healthy diet and try to get enough sleep.
- Talk with family and friends, or join a support group.
- Read books on the subject of coping with miscarriage.
- Keep a journal.
- Exercise after the bleeding stops (this will help a lot!)