

Support and Recovery After Miscarriage: A Guide for Partners and Loved Ones



Highlights

Surgical management of miscarriage, also known as dilation and curettage (D&C), is a minor procedure performed through the vagina, without the need for cuts or stitches.

After surgery, you may experience light bleeding and mild cramps for 7 to 14 days.

A follow-up appointment with your doctor should be scheduled 4 to 6 weeks after the procedure.

Support services are available to assist you during the recovery process following a miscarriage.

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Understanding Surgical Management of Miscarriage

Surgical management of miscarriage is a procedure used to remove pregnancy tissue, also known as dilation and curettage (D&C). It is typically performed when a miscarriage occurs before 20 weeks of pregnancy.

Details of the Procedure

A D&C is performed under general anesthesia, ensuring that you will not feel any pain during the procedure. The surgery is conducted through the vagina without the need for cuts or stitches. Prior to the procedure, you may be given medication to soften your cervix.

The procedure involves gently dilating the cervix and removing the pregnancy tissue via suction curettage. The surgery takes approximately 10 minutes.

Afterward, you will rest in the recovery area for a few hours before being sent home. It is recommended that you have someone drive you home as the anesthesia may leave you feeling drowsy.

How to Prepare for the Procedure

Before the D&C, you may be instructed to fast for 6-8 hours.

It is also helpful to pack the following items to bring to the hospital:

- Sanitary pads and toiletries
- Phone and charger
- Comfortable clothing for your return home
- A water bottle
- A book or magazine for comfort

Check with your doctor for any additional instructions prior to the surgery.

Expected Recovery Timeline

You can expect light bleeding and mild cramps for 7 to 14 days following the surgery. During this period, you should use sanitary pads instead of tampons.

Over-the-counter painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen are typically enough to manage the pain.

During your recovery, avoid:

- Sexual activity
- Taking baths
- Swimming

You should have a follow-up appointment with your doctor 4 to 6 weeks after the miscarriage to assess your progress. Your first period after the miscarriage may be heavier than usual and will likely return around 4 to 6 weeks after the procedure.

What You Will Need at Home

At home, it's a good idea to have the following on hand:

- Sanitary pads
- Pain relief medications such as paracetamol or ibuprofen
- Time to rest
- A support person

When to Consult Your Doctor

If bleeding or pain persists after two weeks, or if you experience the following symptoms, you should consult your doctor:

- Soaking 1 to 2 sanitary pads per hour
- Passing large blood clots (golf ball size)
- Severe abdominal (stomach) pain
- A fever (temperature of 38°C or higher) or chills
- Dizziness, lightheadedness, or fainting
- Unusual or foul-smelling vaginal discharge

Possible Complications

While the risks of a D&C are low, complications can still arise, such as:

Infection \(\text{up to 3 in 100 women require antibiotics}\)

Leftover pregnancy tissue in the uterus, which can lead to prolonged or heavy bleeding, requiring a follow-up procedure

Rarely, damage to the cervix or uterus \(\text{about 1 in 1,000 cases}\)

Rare complications include hemorrhage \(\text{heavy bleeding}\) or adhesions \(\text{scarring}\) on the uterus lining

A reaction to the anesthesia, though this is very uncommon

Alternatives to Surgical Management

In some cases, alternative options to surgical management of miscarriage may be available, such as:

Opting for medically managed miscarriage

Waiting for the miscarriage to happen naturally

Tools and Assistance

After a miscarriage, both emotional and practical support is crucial. Below are some tools and assistance options that can help you navigate this difficult time:

Emotional Support Services Many hospitals, clinics, and private organizations provide counseling and support services for individuals and couples coping with miscarriage. These services are designed to help you process grief, emotions, and the psychological impact of a pregnancy loss. You may also be able to find support groups where you can connect with others who have had similar experiences.

Healthcare Professionals Your doctor, midwife, or counselor can provide support and guidance during your recovery. Regular check-ins and follow-up appointments are essential for monitoring your physical recovery after the procedure. If you experience any complications or have concerns, don't hesitate to reach out to your healthcare provider for assistance.

Online Support Networks Many online platforms offer communities where individuals can share their experiences, seek advice, and find support. These networks often host forums, virtual support groups, and resources to help you cope emotionally and practically after a miscarriage.

Mental Health Resources Seeking professional help from a mental health expert such as a therapist or psychologist can provide valuable support, especially if you're struggling with your emotional well-being. Therapy sessions may focus on grief counseling, emotional recovery, and helping you process difficult feelings.

Practical Help from Friends and Family Rely on friends, family, or loved ones who can provide practical assistance, such as helping with household chores, preparing meals, or offering emotional support. Don't hesitate to let them know how they can best support you during this time.

Support for Gender-Diverse Individuals For individuals in sexually and gender-diverse relationships, there are specialized support services available that understand and address the unique challenges faced by these communities. These services provide culturally sensitive counseling and support tailored to your specific needs.

Pain Management and Recovery Aids Your doctor can suggest pain management strategies and medications to ease discomfort after the surgical procedure. Additionally, having access to recovery aids like heating pads, comfortable clothing, and a quiet, restful space at home can help speed up physical recovery.

Financial Assistance Some organizations may offer financial support or assistance to help with medical costs and other expenses that arise during or after miscarriage treatment. Check with your healthcare provider or local resources for more information.