

Understanding Miscarriage: Physical, Emotional, and Practical Support



Highlights

Bleeding usually stops within 2 weeks after a miscarriage.

It is important to see your doctor by 6 weeks after a miscarriage, or if you have any symptoms that are not getting better or are concerning.

If you miscarry before 20 weeks of pregnancy, there is no formal need to register the birth or death or have a funeral.

It can take time to be emotionally ready to try for another pregnancy, even if you have physically recovered from a miscarriage.

Support is available from friends, family, and many dedicated organizations.

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What to Do After a Miscarriage at Home

If you have miscarried at home, you should see your doctor to confirm that the miscarriage is complete and that you do not need any medical treatment.

You may decide to collect any tissue you pass in a container to take to your appointment. Your doctor may recommend sending the tissue to a laboratory for testing, to try to find a cause, especially if you have had multiple miscarriages. It's important to remember that most miscarriages happen without an identifiable cause.

What Happens If a Miscarriage Occurs in a Hospital?

If you miscarry in a hospital, you may wish to see your baby. This may or may not be possible, depending on:

- The stage of your pregnancy
- When the baby died
- Whether you had a dilatation and curettage (D&C)

Sometimes your baby may not be recognizable, and the staff may advise you not to view the remains. If you think you would like to see your baby, discuss your wishes with the hospital staff.

Legal Requirements After a Miscarriage

Legal obligations following your miscarriage may vary depending on your location. Your healthcare provider will inform you of any requirements.

Generally, if you miscarry in the first 20 weeks of pregnancy, the birth and death of your baby cannot be formally registered. This means that you will not

receive a birth or a death certificate.

Some hospitals offer a certificate to commemorate your baby. Many governments also offer optional certificates recognizing early pregnancy loss to support parents grieving a miscarriage.

You are not legally required to have a funeral, burial, or cremation, although you may choose to do so.

Hospital Services and Support for Miscarriage

The services offered for miscarriage vary between different hospitals. If you do not make any specific requests, the pregnancy tissue is commonly examined in a laboratory and then cremated according to hospital protocol.

Some hospitals offer shared memorial services to commemorate pregnancy loss. Your hospital may also offer a social worker or bereavement support.

Can I Arrange a Funeral for My Baby?

While there is no legal obligation to have a funeral, burial, or cremation after a miscarriage, you may choose to make your own arrangements to mark your loss.

You may choose to engage a private funeral director or approach your religious leader for advice about having a funeral, burial, or cremation. You may also decide to bury your baby at home.

Recovery Time After a Miscarriage

Recovery is different for every person. Your physical recovery may be affected by:

How far along you were in your pregnancy

If you were treated with any medicines or procedures for your miscarriage

Any complications you experienced

Bleeding and discomfort may continue for up to 2 weeks.

Things to consider:

Do not put anything in your vagina - use pads for the bleeding, not tampons.
Use pain relief medicine such as paracetamol.
Avoid sex and swimming until the bleeding stops.

Seek medical help if:

The bleeding is heavy (soaking 1 to 2 maxi pads in an hour).
The bleeding started to resolve, then becomes heavier again.
The bleeding continues for more than 2 weeks.
You pass large blood clots.
You experience severe pain.
You have a fever or smelly vaginal discharge.

Emotional Impact of Miscarriage

Having a miscarriage can lead to many different emotions. It is important to recognize that there is no right or wrong way to feel. There are support services available to help you and your partner.

Common emotions include:

Sadness
Numbness
Anger
Denial
Disappointment

Your feelings may change over time. Key dates such as the expected due date or the anniversary of the miscarriage can be difficult. Seek support if you feel you need it.

How a Miscarriage Affects Relationships

You and your partner may experience different emotions during and after a miscarriage. For some, it can strengthen the relationship, while for others, it

may create challenges. It's important to talk openly and seek professional help if needed.

How to Get Support from Family and Friends

You may not feel comfortable discussing your miscarriage with family and friends, especially if you hadn't shared your pregnancy news. However, many find it helpful to seek emotional and practical support from loved ones during this difficult time.

When to Follow Up with Your Doctor After a Miscarriage

You should follow up with your doctor or midwife no later than 6 weeks after your miscarriage. They can provide support, answer questions, and offer advice on contraception or planning future pregnancies.

Seek medical attention sooner if you have any worrying symptoms or need additional support.

What Miscarriage Means for Future Pregnancies

Most people who miscarry go on to have healthy pregnancies. Factors that can influence your chances include:

- Your age
- Your partner's age
- Lifestyle choices (e.g., smoking)
- Any medical conditions you have
- How many miscarriages you've had

If you've experienced 3 or more miscarriages, your doctor may recommend seeing a fertility specialist.

How Soon Can I Get Pregnant Again?

Fertility can return quickly after a miscarriage, so it's important to use contraception until you are ready to try again. Some studies suggest a slightly higher risk of miscarriage if you become pregnant immediately after a

miscarriage, so many doctors recommend waiting for at least one cycle before trying again.

Planning for a Future Pregnancy

It may take time to be emotionally ready for another pregnancy, even if you've physically recovered. Talk openly with your partner and discuss how you feel.

Things you can do to increase your chances of a healthy pregnancy include:

Track your cycle and time intercourse around ovulation

Avoid smoking and drinking alcohol

Reduce caffeine intake

Stay physically active

Eat a balanced diet

Maintain a healthy weight

Tools and Assistance

Medical Support

Doctor or Midwife: It's important to follow up with your healthcare provider after a miscarriage to ensure physical recovery and address any concerns. Your doctor can guide you through the next steps, including potential testing for causes of miscarriage and options for future pregnancies.

Social Workers and Bereavement Support: Hospitals often provide access to social workers or counselors who specialize in supporting individuals and couples experiencing miscarriage. They can offer emotional support and help you navigate the grieving process.

Emotional Support and Counseling

Counseling Services: Professional counseling can help you process emotions such as grief, sadness, and loss. Many counselors specialize in reproductive loss and can offer guidance through this challenging time.

Support Groups: Many organizations offer support groups for those who have experienced pregnancy loss. These groups provide an opportunity to connect with others who understand the emotional impact of miscarriage.

Online Resources and Helplines

Peer Support Networks: There are numerous online platforms and forums where individuals can share their experiences and receive emotional support. These spaces often offer a sense of community and validation from others who have gone through similar experiences.

Helplines for Miscarriage Support: Many charities and organizations offer helplines where trained counselors provide support and answer questions related to miscarriage, grief, and next steps.

Legal and Administrative Assistance

Legal Guidance: While there may not be legal requirements for miscarriage under 20 weeks, some people may want information on the process of obtaining certificates or navigating legal questions about pregnancy loss. Legal support services can provide guidance on these matters.

Funeral Planning Assistance: If you choose to have a funeral or memorial service, there are funeral directors who specialize in pregnancy loss. They can help you with the process of arranging services, whether it's a simple ceremony or a more elaborate service for your baby.

Health and Well-Being Resources

Fertility Specialists: If you've experienced multiple miscarriages, it may be helpful to consult a fertility specialist who can assess your reproductive health and offer medical solutions to help prevent future losses.

Support for Partners: Both partners often experience miscarriage differently, and it's essential to acknowledge the emotional and psychological impact it has on the relationship. Many services provide counseling and resources tailored to couples experiencing pregnancy loss.

Online Tools for Pregnancy and Fertility

Cycle Tracking Apps: These apps can help track ovulation, menstruation, and pregnancy attempts after a miscarriage. They can be a useful tool for planning future pregnancies when you are ready.

Diet and Lifestyle Resources: Maintaining a healthy lifestyle, including good

nutrition and exercise, can increase the chances of a successful pregnancy. Online platforms and health experts provide guidance on how to optimize your health before trying again.