



MISCARRIAGE
ASSOCIATION

The knowledge to help

Miscarriage: the facts and your feelings



Having a miscarriage can be a very upsetting experience.

You might have been trying for a baby or you might have got pregnant by mistake. Either way it can be a confusing and sad time.

We created this leaflet to help you understand your feelings and the facts about miscarriage.¹

Your feelings

There's no 'right' way to feel after a miscarriage. Different people react in different ways. Some people feel better quickly and others find it takes a long time.

Everyone's feelings are different but the young women we spoke to said they experienced some of these:

tired scared
guilt shock crying
lonely confused jealous
relief numb acceptance sadness
anger depression empty

You might have these feelings straight away or some time after the miscarriage or you might find that they come back later.

**“Our hearts are broken,
we never imagined losing
our baby”**



¹ We have written this leaflet as if we are talking to the woman who has miscarried. We hope it will also be useful to her partner, family and friends

Miscarriage after unplanned pregnancy

“You have so many emotions to go through into accepting the pregnancy only to have that taken away again.”

If your pregnancy was unplanned then you might have been shocked or scared when you found out you were pregnant. You might not have been sure what to do.

You might have been excited and hopeful about the future. Many unplanned pregnancies become very much wanted.

You might have been thinking about abortion. The miscarriage might be a relief as the decision was taken out of your hands – but you might also feel guilty – as if the thoughts caused it (they didn’t).

If you weren’t sure you wanted to be pregnant or you became pregnant as a result of sexual abuse, you may expect to be relieved after a miscarriage. Some people do feel this way. Other people find that they are still upset.

You might also find your thoughts about when you want a baby have changed.

You have probably experienced a lot of strong emotions and upheaval. It may take a while to understand how you feel.

It may help to talk to people around you, to other women and girls who have experienced miscarriage or to someone at the Miscarriage Association.

Talking and getting support

Talking to someone who you trust can help you feel less alone. It can sometimes help things feel easier to deal with. But we know it isn’t always easy. We hope that the suggestions on the next two pages are helpful.

Talking to... parents or carers

Talking to your parents or carers might seem impossible. But a lot of people are surprised by their reaction and find it helpful to have their support. Plan what you want to say and choose a time when you are able to talk without distractions. Think about the different ways they might react and how you will respond. This can help you stay calm and feel in control.



“I was terrified of telling my parents as I knew they would be angry. It was a hard conversation but in the end it helped that they knew”

Talking to... friends

“If it wasn’t for one amazing friend, everything would have been much harder”

Friends can be fantastic support. But they might not know what to say or how to help. It might be useful to give them this leaflet or send them a link to our ‘Someone you know’ leaflet.

You could even say:



Talking to... your boyfriend or girlfriend (if you have one)

“He didn’t know how to deal with it so he just stopped talking about it. I needed his support but didn’t know how to ask. I wish we’d talked about it more now”

If you have a boyfriend or girlfriend, you might want to talk to him or her about your experience.

They might try to ‘be strong’ for you but this can sometimes come across as if they don’t care. They might be relieved or might not understand why you feel so sad. They might just not know how to support you. Try and focus on what you feel and what you would like rather than what they are doing wrong. You could give them this leaflet or a link to the Miscarriage Association website too.



Talking to... a nurse, counsellor or teacher at school or college

It might be helpful to talk to an adult you trust in school or college. Make sure you ask them if they have to tell anyone else, especially if you’re not ready to tell your parents.

You could say:



Dealing with difficult reactions

Family, friends and boyfriends

“My mother was relieved, I also didn’t tell her until a few weeks after the miscarriage and she was positive, said it was for the best. I know why she felt that way but it still hurt.”

We really hope you get the support you deserve from people around you. But you might find that some people react in ways that are upsetting or hurtful.

Sometimes people mean well but say the wrong thing.

Some people might not understand what your loss means to you. They might think that because you are young or your pregnancy was unplanned that the miscarriage was a ‘good’ outcome. This can be really hurtful.

“People said ‘it was lucky really’. I don’t know how to deal with that”



If you feel people don’t understand, it might be helpful to say something like “I can see why you might feel that way, but I’m finding it really hard”.

You might also like to talk to people who do understand through the Miscarriage Association Facebook page or forum.

Doctors, nurses and medical staff

Sometimes it can seem as if doctors and nurses don't care but usually they are just very busy.

Although they know all about the medical stuff they may not know what it actually feels like to have a miscarriage. Sometimes they can say things that are meant to help but don't really.

The most important thing is to make sure that you ask any questions you have. Even if it feels a bit uncomfortable, it's better to ask when you have the doctor or nurse in front of you than to go home feeling confused and uncertain.

“At the time I just wanted to get out of there but now I wish I had asked for more information. I wasn't told that I would keep bleeding”

Remembering your baby

Many people want to do something to remember their baby.

You can ask the hospital what they offer. They might have a book of remembrance or can give you a memorial certificate or your scan picture.

Some people find it helpful to plant flowers or a tree, make a donation to charity, or perhaps write a letter or a poem to their baby. Some people write a message to add to our **virtual forget-me-not meadow** on our website.



The facts

Knowing more about what is happening in your body and what the doctors and nurses are talking about can help you feel more in control. This section explains the basics. There's a lot more information on the Miscarriage Association website.

Doctors and nurses use different words to describe different kinds of pregnancy loss.

Ectopic pregnancy

An ectopic pregnancy or tubal pregnancy is one that develops outside of the womb, usually in one of the fallopian tubes. The egg cannot grow properly outside of the womb so usually you have surgery to remove it.

Find out more on our website – search for **ectopic pregnancy**.

Molar pregnancy or Hydatidiform Mole pregnancy

In a molar pregnancy, an abnormal fertilised egg grows in the uterus (womb). The cells that should become the placenta grow too quickly and leave no space for the baby to develop.

You can find out more on our website – search for **molar pregnancy**.

Miscarriage

A miscarriage is when a pregnancy stops growing and is pushed out through the vagina. Sometimes there is a baby (also known as embryo or fetus) which has died. Other times all that has developed is the pregnancy 'sac' without a visible baby.

Sometimes the uterus (womb) empties itself completely. This is called a natural miscarriage. It can cause bad cramps and you might have heavy bleeding and blood clots.

If you feel OK and the bleeding isn't getting worse then you don't need to go to hospital if you'd rather not. If the bleeding and pain get worse, if you have a high temperature or vaginal discharge that looks or smells bad, then you should contact your doctor.

If you decide to go to Accident & Emergency, you may have to wait a while to be seen. Search our website for **what happens in hospital** for more information.

Sometimes the uterus (womb) does not empty itself completely. This is called an incomplete miscarriage.

What is a missed or delayed miscarriage?

This is when the pregnancy stops growing but isn't pushed out. You would usually find out that this had happened at a scan.

If you have a missed/delayed or incomplete miscarriage your doctor may suggest a small operation to remove the remains of your pregnancy. This is called surgical management (some doctors call it an ERPC).

Or you might be offered pills to start or complete the miscarriage. This is called medical management.

Or you might decide to wait for the miscarriage to happen naturally.

Search our website for **management of miscarriage** for more information.

Why me?

Miscarriage happens in one in four pregnancies but doctors usually don't know exactly why it happens. It is very unlikely that it was caused by anything you did or didn't do. The known causes of miscarriage include:

- The baby doesn't develop normally from the start and can't survive.
- There were problems in the vessels that supply the placenta with blood.
- A very high fever and some illnesses.
- An irregular shaped uterus (womb) or large (usually harmless) growths in the uterus that means there is no room for the baby to grow.

Our leaflet **Why me?** has lots more information.

Will the doctor or hospital tell my parents?

If you are over 16 then the doctor will keep your visit confidential (private).

If you are under 16, your parents will not be told about your visit to hospital as long as the doctors believe that you are able to understand what your treatment means.

Doctors and nurses might try and persuade you that it would be a good idea to talk to your parents. But if they believe you are able to consent to your own treatment then they must respect your right to decide for yourself.

What happens next?

While the bleeding continues you can reduce the risk of infection by using pads rather than tampons. You should avoid sex until the bleeding stops. It's fine to bath and shower but best not to go swimming.

You are likely to get your next period 4-6 weeks after the miscarriage. It might be heavier than usual.

Pregnancy in the future

After one miscarriage most women go on to have a normal pregnancy.

You might be thinking about getting pregnant again quickly, or you might want to wait. Sometimes having a miscarriage can change your ideas about what you want in the future. It can be helpful to talk about your feelings about pregnancy with someone you trust or with us at the Miscarriage Association.

If you don't want to get pregnant again, you can talk to Brook about the right kind of contraception for you. Search **www.brook.org.uk** for **contraception**.

Where to find help and support

Having a miscarriage, or ectopic or molar pregnancy, can be a very upsetting experience, but you don't have to go through it alone. Hopefully you will find some support from family, friends, your partner or someone else - but here are some more people and places that can help.

The Miscarriage Association

“The website is jam-packed with information and it's really great that everyone has so many options. There is something for everybody”

We're here to help. We can give you information and explain any medical stuff you don't understand. We can put you in touch with other people who have been through something similar. We can offer you a listening ear and help you find other sources of support or counselling if you need.

We know that picking up the phone and talking to someone you don't know can sometimes make you nervous. You might not know how to start or what to say. Our helpline staff and volunteers can help you find the right words.

We've also got lots of online support available through our forum and our private Facebook group. Search our website for **online support and services**.

Search for **talking about miscarriage** on our website for help having those hard conversations.

Our **personal reflections** and videos can sometimes help you feel less alone. Sharing them with other people can help you explain how you feel.

Other helpful places

Samaritans – 24 hour telephone support on 08457 909090
(www.samaritans.org)

Local Advice Finder – Find support in your area
(<http://www.thesite.org/community/localadvicefinder> or use the StepFinder app)

TheSite – An online guide to life for 16-25 year olds (www.thesite.org)

Brook – Sexual health and information for under 25's (www.brook.org.uk)

CALM – Support, info and advice for young men (www.thecalmzone.net)

Relate – Relationships advice and support (www.relate.org.uk)

Thanks

We'd like to thank everyone who shared their thoughts and experiences with us and allowed us to use their comments in this leaflet.

Need to talk to someone who understands?

Call our support line on 01924 200799. Monday to Friday, 9am-4pm

Or email info@miscarriageassociation.org.uk



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The knowledge to help

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