



Miscarriage is the loss of pregnancy before 20 weeks when the embryo or fetus cannot live outside the uterus. The medical term is spontaneous abortion.

Miscarriage is common. 1-2 of every 10 pregnancies end in miscarriage. It is most likely in early pregnancy; 8 of 10 miscarriages happen in the first three months.

Possible signs of miscarriage include:

- » vaginal bleeding or spotting
- » severe abdominal pain
- » severe cramps
- » dull, lower-back ache, pressure, or pain
- » change in vaginal discharge

Cramps can range in intensity. Some women have no pain at all. A miscarriage involves bleeding, sometimes with large blood clots. Heavy bleeding can be surprising or scary.

Bleeding and cramping may be brief or last several hours. Your health care provider can give you medicine, advice to manage pain, and tell you what to expect. It is important to tell them what is happening with your body and how you are doing.

If you think you might be having a miscarriage, contact your health care provider as soon as possible.

It's natural to wonder what caused a miscarriage. Some women may blame themselves but it is rarely caused by something they did. Having sex, exercise, a mild fall, and most medications do not cause miscarriage.

It is difficult for health care providers to know an exact cause of miscarriage. Things that make it more likely are:

- » In at least 50% of cases, the embryo or fetus has a chromosome that causes some abnormal development. This is usually random and not a sign of a condition that may cause problems in future pregnancies.
- » Risk of miscarriage increases with age.
- » Severe chronic illness - like poorly controlled diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, or lupus - can increase risk.
- » Severe trauma and very serious infections.
- » Abnormalities in the uterus, like scar tissue or uterine fibroids, can cause later miscarriages (after three months).
- » Smoking, using alcohol or cocaine, and heavy caffeine use have all been linked to miscarriage.
- » Women who have had two or more miscarriages in a row have a greater risk of future miscarriage.

Types of miscarriage include:

Threatened: Involves bleeding (sometimes with mild cramps) but the cervix stays closed. The pregnancy ends in 50% of cases; in the other 50%, bleeding stops and the pregnancy continues normally.

Inevitable: Bleeding increases; the cervix begins to open. The pregnancy cannot continue.

Incomplete: The uterus expels some, but not all, of the pregnancy tissue. Treatment may be needed to remove the remaining tissue.

Complete: The uterus expels all the pregnancy tissue. No treatment is usually needed.

Missed: The pregnancy has ended, but tissue remains in the uterus. It may leave the uterus on its own in time. Sometimes medication or an aspiration procedure is needed. In an aspiration, a health care provider inserts a thin plastic tube in the uterus and uses gentle suction to remove the pregnancy tissue.

Ectopic Pregnancy: Ectopic or tubal pregnancy is a kind of pregnancy loss. It happens when a fertilized egg gets implanted outside the uterus, most commonly in a fallopian tube. More rarely, an egg may be implanted in an ovary or the abdominal cavity.

After a miscarriage, women have a wide range of reactions - including disappointment, despair, shock, guilt, grief, and relief. Whatever your feelings, remember:

- » Try to accept them as they come.
- » Grief and relief are both normal responses to miscarriage.
- » Others in your life may also need to grieve. They may not share your exact feelings or express them the same way. Talking about your feelings and supporting each other can help you cope with the loss together.

Allow yourself to heal at your own pace. Your health care provider can give you advice about getting pregnant again you or preventing it until you are ready. Let them know if you are struggling to return to your usual activities after a miscarriage. They may know other ways and places to support you.

If you have had two or more miscarriages in a row, your health care provider may suggest tests for any hormonal imbalances, genetic disorders, or other problems. Tests may reveal a condition that can be treated.

Adapted from Planned Parenthood: <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/health-topics/pregnancy/miscarriage-19894.htm>
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