

Snohomish Midwives  
57 Cedar Avenue  
Snohomish, WA 98290  
877-869-6105  
Fax: 360-563-2662

## **Miscarriage**

Pregnancy loss is a highly emotional, physical, and spiritual experience.

### **Why does it happen?**

Miscarriage occurs in 15-20% of all pregnancies and is most likely to take place in the first trimester. 70% of first-trimester miscarriages are caused by chromosomal abnormalities in the fetus resulting from a faulty egg or sperm. Other causes are hormonal problems, genital tract infections (e.g. bacterial vaginosis), maternal health problems (e.g. poorly controlled diabetes, lupus, thyroid disease), and issues related to maternal lifestyle (e.g. drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes, and using illicit drugs). Second-trimester loss is often caused by problems with the mother's uterus or cervix, chromosomal abnormalities (20%), and maternal immune system problems. Despite the above information, the cause of some miscarriage is not known.

### **What can I expect?**

During the course of the miscarriage most commonly there is vaginal bleeding, with or without pain (cramp-like) in the abdomen and/or lower back. The bleeding tends to get heavier, as does the pain, and usually climaxes with the passing of some clots or tissue. Please note: if you soak more than 2 maxi pads in one hour, then page the midwife on call. Sometimes when miscarriage occurs early in pregnancy, tissue is left in the uterus which needs to be removed to avoid excess bleeding and/or infection. This tissue may be removed by dilation and curettage (D&C). With this method, the cervix is opened and then the tissue is gently removed from the lining of the uterus. You can expect spotting and discomfort for a few days following a D&C.

The midwife may do a vaginal exam to see if your cervix is dilated, schedule an ultrasound, do laboratory tests to confirm the miscarriage, or refer you outside of her care for a D&C.

### **How can I physically cope with this?**

- Make sure to have someone with you at home for support.
- Get rest, drink lots of fluids, and avoid putting anything in your vagina.
- For the cramping, you can take homeopathic mag phos cell salts, soak in an Epsom salt bath, or use a castor oil pack as long as bleeding is minimal. You can also try 200mg of ibuprofen every 6 hours.

- To encourage contractions, make a tea or tincture of the following herbs:
  - 1 part blue cohosh (caulophyllum thalactroides)
  - 1 part black cohosh (cimicifuga racemosa)
  - 1 part cotton wood bark (gossypium herbaceum)

Tea=1 T. dried herb /cup tea. Cover and steep 20 minutes. Drink 3-4 cups/day.

Tincture=1 tsp. 3-4 x/day. This formula should be continued for 3-4 days after you have miscarried to insure complete expulsion.
- To increase bleeding and prostaglandin production, take a one time dose of 15-20 grams of unbuffered vitamin C (this might cause diarrhea). Also take high doses (20-30 capsules) of an Omega-3 oil (e.g. Evening Primrose, Black Currant Oil, Borage Oil, etc.).
- For excessive bleeding, use 1 dropperful of styptic tincture (1 part yarrow tincture [achillea millefolium] + 1 part Sheppard's purse [capsela bursa-pastoris]) every 15 minutes for up to 2 hours.
- Monitor your temperature twice a day until you have miscarried. Please note: if you experience fever, uterine tenderness, or foul odor then page the midwife on call. We recommend taking some herbal immune support during this process.
- The midwife will want to see you for a follow-up appointment 2 weeks after your miscarriage but you are encouraged to contact her if you have any questions or concerns beforehand.
- If you had a D&C, the doctor who handled the procedure will have information about coping and follow-up.

### **What will my recovery be like?**

Normally there are no tests done following a first trimester miscarriage, unless bleeding was excessive or if it persists. However, if you have had a second trimester miscarriage or multiple first-trimester miscarriages, the midwife may recommend further testing and a complete medical evaluation to explore the cause.

It can take weeks to a month or more for you to recover physically, depending on how long you were pregnant at the time you miscarried. It is safe to have sex after the bleeding stops but be sure to use birth control if you do not want to become pregnant. You can expect to resume menstruation 4-6 weeks following a miscarriage.

Emotionally it can take much longer to recover. You and your partner may feel intense grief as you mourn your loss. You may experience a range of emotions including numbness, sadness, guilt, anger, depression, and difficulty concentrating. You and your partner may handle grief in different ways, creating tension between the two of you at a time when you need each other most. Try not to blame yourself, rather nurture yourself to help heal the wound from this loss. Reach out to those closest to you for their understanding, comfort, and support. Honor the time you had with your baby and consider creating a ritual to say good-bye so you will be able to move on with your life. Most early pregnancy losses cannot be prevented. Losing a pregnancy often doesn't mean that you can't have more children or that there is

something wrong with your health. Most women who miscarry have a healthy pregnancy later.

### **How long before I can try to conceive again?**

After a miscarriage, some parents want to try as soon as possible to get pregnant again while others are unsure whether they ever want to try again. It is a difficult and personal decision that can only be made by you and your partner. We recommend waiting until you are physically, medically, and emotionally ready to conceive again. Physically, depending on any procedures you might have had, this usually means after two normal menstrual cycles. If you had testing to determine the cause of the miscarriage, it is advised to await the results. As for emotionally, this is more challenging and can take a longer amount of time.

### **What resources do I have?**

#### Medical

- Eastside Maternal Fetal Medicine 425-899-2200 Kirkland/688-8111 Bellevue

#### Counseling

- Julian Nason Ashe with Chrysalis Counseling Services in Everett 206-604-0996  
[www.chrysaliscounselingservices.com/index.phtml](http://www.chrysaliscounselingservices.com/index.phtml)

#### Local Support Groups

- Compassionate Friends 206-241-1139
- Parent Support 206-782-0054
- Support After Miscarriage 206-386-2796 (Verla Hirsch)
- Pregnancy After Loss 206-386-6133
- A Small Victory 425-985-9376 (Liz Allen) [www.asmallvictory.org](http://www.asmallvictory.org)
- P.S. My Baby Died (Overlake Hospital, Bellevue) 425-827-0301
- Parents of Stillborns 206-782-0054

#### Web: Online support groups/resources/organizations

- [http://dailystrength.org/support/Womens\\_Health/Miscarriage\\_Stillbirth/](http://dailystrength.org/support/Womens_Health/Miscarriage_Stillbirth/)
- <http://www.angelfire.com/emo/miscarriage/>
- <http://www.miscarriagesupport.org.nz/>
- <http://www.silentgrief.com/>
- <http://www.webhealing.com/>
- <http://www.aplacetoremember.com/>
- <http://www.quietrefuge.com/home.cfm>
- <http://www.pregnancyloss.info/>
- <http://miscarriagehelp.com/index.php?catid=23>
- <http://www.hygeia.org/>
- <http://www.nationalshareoffice.com/>

#### Books

- **Silent Grief** (Clara Hinton) - Hope and support for those who have suffered miscarriage, stillbirth, or later child loss

- **Helping People Through Grief** (Delores Kuenning) - A sensitive guide to help people through pain and loss
- **Swallowed by a Snake: The Gift of the Masculine Side of Healing** (Thomas R. Golden, LCSW) - A book honoring the uniqueness of a man's path towards healing
- **Hope is like the Sun** (Lisa Church) - Finding Hope and Healing After Miscarriage, Stillbirth, or Infant Death
- **Trying Again** (Ann Douglas)- A Guide to Pregnancy After Miscarriage, Stillbirth or Infant Loss

Inspirational Words/Music

- **Getting Through It (Audio CD)** - Music and words to help you through your grief featuring songs from: Tuck & Patti, Taj Mahal, Eric Clapton. Order at <http://www.gettingthroughit.com/>