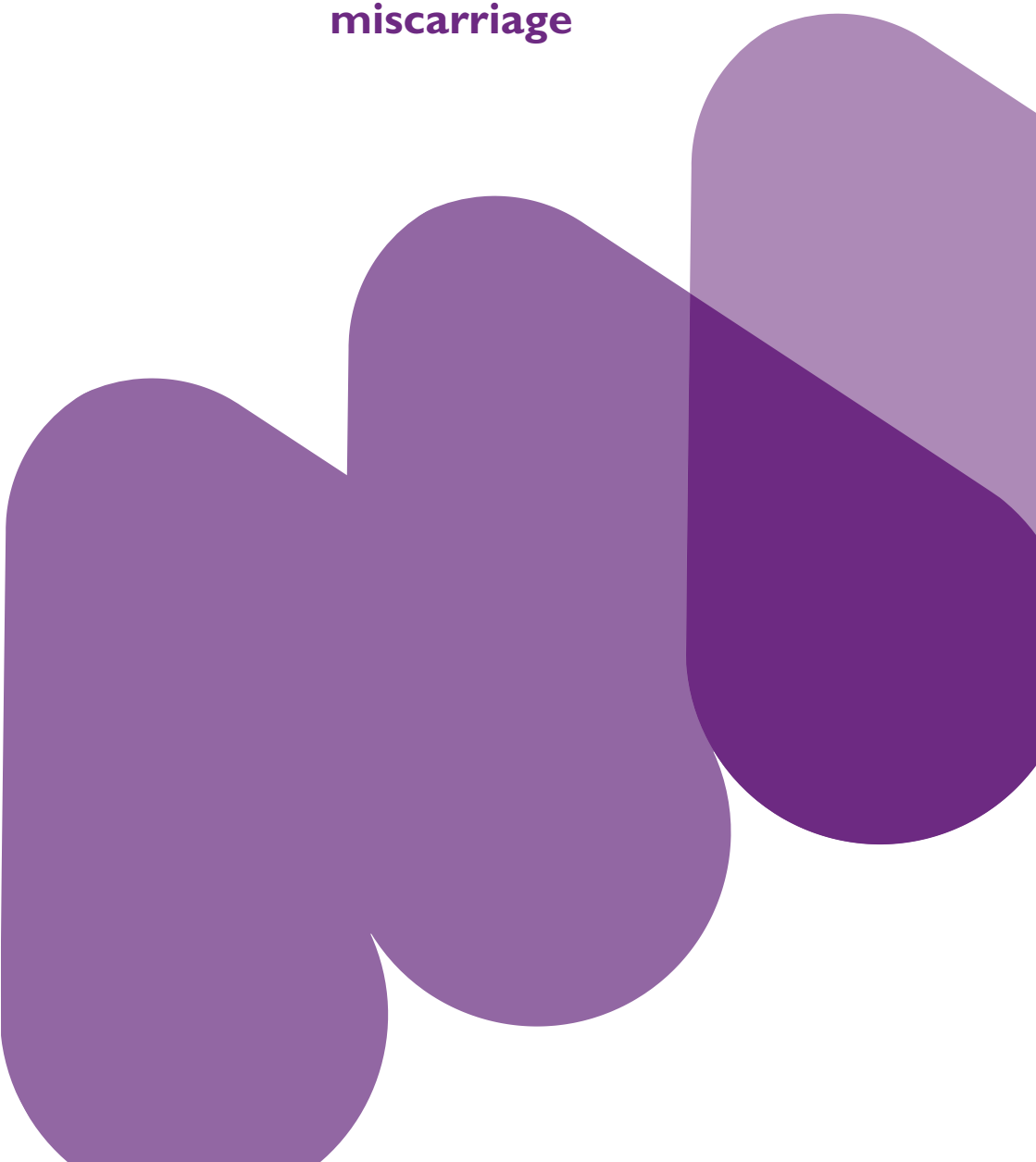




MISCARRIAGE
ASSOCIATION

The knowledge to help

Your feelings after miscarriage



Every miscarriage is different; and there is no right way to feel about it. This leaflet looks at how your loss might affect you, your partner and other people in your life. It also suggests ways to help you cope.

Is it normal to feel this way?

Miscarriage* can be a devastating experience. For some women it is a great sadness; others are upset at the time but recover quickly.

How you feel will depend on your circumstances, your experience of miscarriage and what the pregnancy meant to you.

Maybe this pregnancy was particularly special. Perhaps there was an earlier loss – or more than one.

You may be worried about your chances of conceiving again; or about miscarrying again if you do.

You may be feeling ill and drained after a very difficult miscarriage. Hormonal changes might be making things harder too.

“I’ve never cried so much in my whole life. I feel so empty and lost.”

All these things will affect how you feel about your miscarriage and how long it will take to for you to move on.

But it is perfectly normal to feel any or all of these:

- Sad and tearful
- Shocked and confused
- Numb
- Angry
- Jealous
- Guilty
- Empty and lonely
- Panicky and out of control
- Unable to cope with everyday life

“I was very upset for about an hour after the scan. And then I felt sad and disappointed, which lessened over the next couple of weeks.”

**Although this leaflet talks about ‘miscarriage’, most of the feelings described apply to ectopic and molar pregnancies too.*

See page 11 for our leaflets on these losses.

You may feel your loss in physical ways, even some time after the miscarriage. This can include:

- Feeling very tired
- Having headaches or stomach pains
- Being short of breath
- Finding it difficult to sleep – or sleeping a lot

These problems will probably disappear in time, but you could talk to your GP if you are worried.

Miscarriage and mental health problems

For some people, miscarriage may be part of what causes a mental health problem - or makes one worse. You might be given a diagnosis or experience symptoms that make life difficult for a long time.

It can be hard to admit you need extra support but seeking help early may help you cope. We have more information online and in our leaflet '*Looking after your mental health during and after pregnancy loss*' (see page 11).

“ After the ectopic was removed, I was in complete shock... Not only had I lost the baby but I also felt physically damaged. ”

A special sort of grief

Miscarriage is a different kind of loss. It's not like grieving for someone you knew. Instead you might mourn the loss of your baby's future and your own future as that baby's parent. This can be hard for others to understand and relate to.

The physical effects of miscarriage – especially the pain and bleeding – can increase your sadness and fear at the time.

Afterwards there may be problems that add to your distress and make it hard to move forward. These include continued bleeding, exhaustion and the need for further tests and treatment.

At the same time you may be worrying about the future. Will you manage to get pregnant again – and what will happen next time?

“ It's hard to know if it's normal grief or worse due to previous struggles with depression. ”

Why do I feel like this?

- ‘Are my feelings normal?’
- ‘Should I be over it by now?’
- ‘Why am I upset when others have had it worse than me?’

People often ask these questions after miscarriage. But there are no rules about how you should feel.

And there are no rules which say that some experiences of miscarriages are less upsetting than others.

We all react in our own way.

Even a very early miscarriage can lead to strong feelings of loss. If you felt very attached to your baby as soon as you knew you were pregnant, you are likely to be very upset if you miscarry.

Perhaps you knew your baby had died but it took some time before you actually miscarried. You might feel very sad, but also relieved that the uncertainty and waiting are over.

Even if you didn't really want to get pregnant, you may still feel very upset.

“Everyone thinks I should be over it by now, that I should just have another baby. But it's this baby I want.”

If you have a child or children already, that might bring you some comfort. But it doesn't necessarily make this loss easier to bear.

You may feel particularly low if it took a long time to get pregnant. It may be especially hard if you had fertility treatment or if this is your last chance to have a baby. Our leaflet *Pregnancy loss and infertility* may be helpful.

If you are coping with a miscarriage without a partner to support you, you can feel very lonely.

And if you had a previous loss or losses, it can be heartbreaking to go through the experience again – and sometimes again.

“I get really sad and angry, then feel guilty because other women have it so much worse. I'm not sure how I should react, behave, move on.”

How long will I feel like this?

There is no set time for your feelings to ease; and they may last longer than you – and those around you – expect.

Even when you start to feel better, there may still be some tough times.

You might get upset when you have your first period after the miscarriage. The bleeding may take you back to your miscarriage experience. It may also feel like a cruel reminder that you are no longer pregnant.

Sometimes a bad day comes out of the blue. But sometimes it happens for a reason, like if a friend tells you she's pregnant or has a baby.

Bad days often come on special dates – like the day the baby was due, or the anniversary of the miscarriage.

Finding your way through these feelings may not be a straightforward process. Being kind to yourself, talking to people you trust and finding the right help can make a big difference.

If you are finding it difficult to move forward, the Miscarriage Association can help you think through your next steps.

“Take one day at a time. It's okay to have these feelings of grief, anger, resentment, sadness and so much more. They won't always feel this strong.”

What about my partner's feelings?

Some couples find that the sadness of miscarriage brings them closer together. They may not even need support from others.

But grief can put a strain on even the best relationships. You and your partner may grieve in different ways or at different times.

One of you may want to get on with life and the other to take time out.

One of you may be having a bad day while the other feels better. And one of you may need support when the other feels unable to give it.

Your partner may find it very hard if all the attention is on you and their feelings are ignored.

If the strain of your loss is pulling you and your partner apart, you may need to look for outside support (see page 11).

What about sex?

It may take a while for your sex life to get back to normal. Some couples find that making love brings them closer together. But for others it is a reminder of what they have lost.

One of you may want to make love – maybe to show how they care – while the other doesn't.

Sex also raises the question of when – or whether – to try for another baby. Some people want to conceive again quite quickly; others need some breathing time. Sometimes couples disagree and this can add to their stress.

It is normal for sex to be difficult for a while after miscarriage. But if you feel your problems are going on for too long, think about getting some support (see page 11).

You may find it helpful to read our leaflet *Partners Too*.

“ I had difficulties each time that we tried to make love. I felt guilty for trying to enjoy myself soon after losing the baby. ”

Why don't other people understand?

It can be hard to cope if people around you don't understand how you are feeling or expect you to behave in a different way.

You may feel criticised and in the wrong if people suggest you should be getting over your loss and moving on with life.

When you are feeling low, insensitive reactions and words can hurt.

But sometimes people simply don't know what to say or do. And you may need to tell them how you feel and how they could help.

You might want to show them our leaflet *Supporting someone you know*.

Whatever other people say, remember that there is no right or wrong way to feel or behave after miscarriage.

If you can, spend time with people who do understand. They may be able to find ways to help you cope. See our suggestions on page 11.

“Someone said ‘it was only a bunch of cells’, but to my husband and me it was a baby and it was going to be our son or daughter.”

Where can I go for help and support?

If you are struggling to cope with your feelings, you may need some support. This may be very soon after your miscarriage or much later on.

There are different types of support to choose from, for example:

- Talking to someone that you're close to, like your partner, a family member or friend.
- Talking to an 'expert' outsider who can understand what you're going through and can offer support – e.g. the Miscarriage Association's helpline and support volunteers.
- Using our online support forum or our Facebook groups.
- Seeing a professional counsellor, either privately or perhaps through your GP, hospital or fertility clinic. We have more information about counselling after a miscarriage on our website.¹
- Talking to the hospital chaplain or a different religious figure.
- Reading about how other people have felt after miscarriage.

See page 11 for more information, contact details and suggested reading.

Getting your questions answered

If you have lots of questions or worries, you could turn for help to:

- Your GP, practice nurse or midwife.
- The hospital staff where you miscarried.
- The Miscarriage Association helpline and leaflets.

After the miscarriage

If you miscarry in hospital, you may be asked to choose what happens to your baby or their remains. This can be very difficult to think about at all, and they should give you time to decide away from the hospital if you prefer.

By law, losses before 24 weeks do not require burial or cremation but your hospital may offer these, though not always after an early loss. They may offer this even if you miscarry at home.

You may decide you would rather make your own arrangements, either with a funeral director or by burying your baby or their remains yourself. There are some things to consider about burial at home or in a favourite spot and you can find advice by contacting our helpline.

“ I wrote to the Miscarriage Association after my fourth baby died and the comfort and support I felt from that was wonderful. ”

Ways to remember your baby

You may want to find a special way of remembering your baby and marking your loss.

There is no formal certificates for losses before 24 weeks but if you live in England or Scotland, you may be able to apply for a certificate of loss (see page 11). Some hospitals offer a memorial certificate and the Miscarriage Association has a set of certificates that you can choose from.

Some hospitals offer memory boxes, where you can keep a scan photo or, after a late loss, photos of your baby or hand or footprints. Your hospital might also have a book of remembrance where you can make an entry for your baby. Other ideas are:

- Plant flowers or a shrub in your garden or in a pot.
- Light a candle on anniversaries and other 'special' days.
- Add a message to the Stars of Remembrance memorial space on our website.¹
- Buy something special in memory of your baby.
- Write a letter or poem for your baby.
- Fundraise in memory.

“A couple of weeks after I miscarried we bought two plants and planted them in the garden with a pebble pond and a pear tree in memory of our little one.”

Holding a ceremony

If you didn't have a funeral or ceremony after the miscarriage, you may want to hold a memorial service. You could do this in your place of worship, in another place that's special to you or at home. It could be just for close friends and family or even just you and your partner.

Some hospitals organise annual services of remembrance for babies who have died there. You could find out from your ward or the hospital chaplain.

Services like this are sometimes organised by the Miscarriage Association's local groups and other organisations, especially during Baby Loss Awareness Week (9-15 October).

“The star means such a lot to us - somewhere we can look to, whenever we like.”

¹<http://www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk/your-feelings/marking-your-loss/stars-of-remembrance/>

Your feelings: a summary

- There is no right way to feel after miscarriage; it depends on your circumstances, your miscarriage and what the pregnancy meant to you.
- Miscarriage is a different kind of loss and you grieve in a different kind of way.
- How you feel will be unique to you.
- You may feel upset for longer than you – and those around you – expect.
- Miscarriage can be part of what causes a mental health problem - or makes one worse - but there is help available.
- Miscarriage may bring you and your partner closer; but it could put your relationship under strain.
- Friends and family won't always say the right things; but there are plenty of places to go to for help and support.
- It may help to find a special way to remember your baby.

“Once I was able to talk to people who really understood, I managed to come to terms with my feelings and work through my grief... We've since been blessed with a healthy baby boy, but our angel will never be forgotten.”

Where to go for help and support

The Miscarriage Association

has a staffed helpline, live chat, email and direct messaging; online and in-person peer support groups and telephone volunteers; an online forum and private Facebook groups; and a range of leaflets.

www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk

We have more information about marking a loss and certification at www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk/your-feelings/marking-your-loss/.

The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

can help you find a counsellor or psychotherapist.

Tel: 01455 883300

www.bacp.co.uk

Relate

can help with relationship problems.

Tel: 0300 003 0396

(for booking appointments only)

www.relate.org.uk

The Samaritans

can help people in serious emotional distress, 24 hours a day.

Tel: 116 123 (freephone)

www.samaritans.org

Useful reading

About what was lost, by Jessica Berger-Ross, Published by Penguin Group 2007, ISBN: 977 0 452 28799 0

Unspeakable losses: healing from miscarriage, abortion and other pregnancy loss, by Kim Kluger-Bell. Published by William Morrow, 2000, ISBN 06881 7390X

Our stories of miscarriage, edited by Rachel Faldet and Karen Fitton, published by Fairview Press 1997, ISBN: 1 57749 033 9

Leaflets published by the Miscarriage Association include:

- Partners too
- Late miscarriage: second trimester loss
- Ectopic pregnancy
- Molar pregnancy (hydatidiform mole)
- Pregnancy loss and infertility
- Looking after your mental health during and after pregnancy loss
- Talking to children about miscarriage (pdf only)
- Supporting someone you know

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



**MISCARRIAGE
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The knowledge to help

The Miscarriage Association

T: 01924 200799

E: info@miscarriageassociation.org.uk

W: www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk

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