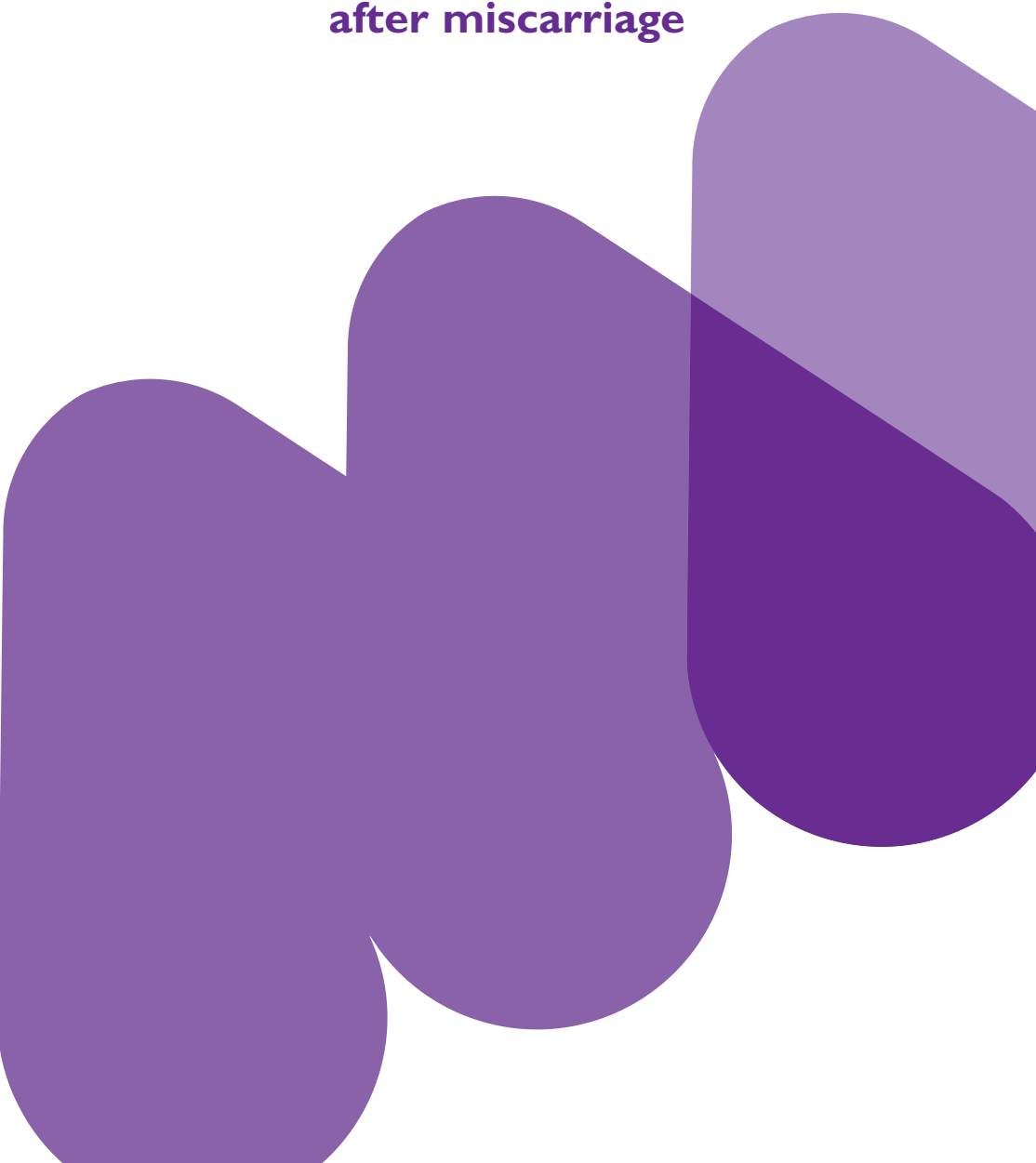




MISCARRIAGE
ASSOCIATION

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.

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

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

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.”

**In this leaflet we use the word ‘miscarriage’ to cover all types of pregnancy loss, including ectopic and molar pregnancies.*

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.

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?

“After the ectopic was removed, I was in complete shock – I had just found out I was pregnant and then it was suddenly all over. Not only had I lost the baby but I also felt physically damaged.”

Why do I feel like this?

- ‘Shouldn’t I be over it by now?’
- ‘Are my feelings normal?’
- ‘Why do I feel so bad when others have suffered more than me?’

Women 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.

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

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

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 because of fertility problems.

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

And if you have lost a baby before, 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 sadness to end; and it may last longer than you – and those around you – expect.

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

You might get upset when you have your first period after the miscarriage. The bleeding can remind you of the miscarriage and the fact 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.

But there will come a time when your feelings change as the pain of your loss eases.

“ I find it very hard to see and be around pregnant women or those with babies. It reminds me of what I have lost – I should have had a baby now – and it makes me very envious. ”

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 his or her 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).

“ 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 *Someone you know*.

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

If you can, spend time with people who do understand. They may be able to find ways to help you cope.

“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.
- Seeing a professional counsellor, either privately or perhaps through your GP, hospital or fertility clinic.
- 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.

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

Getting your questions answered

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

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

What happened to my baby?

You may want to know what happened to your baby after the miscarriage.

Babies who are stillborn or born alive after 24 weeks of pregnancy must, by law, be buried or cremated. There is no law about what happens to babies born before this.

After a late miscarriage most hospitals offer a simple funeral, with burial or cremation. Some hospitals do this for *all* babies, however early the miscarriage. But others dispose of the remains of early losses without a ceremony.

If you want to find out about what happens at your hospital, speak to a nurse or midwife on your ward or the hospital chaplain. The Patient Advice and Liaison (PALS) Officer or the hospital bereavement service may also be able to help.

Ways to remember your baby

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

Some hospitals will give you a certificate in memory of your baby if you ask. Contact a nurse or midwife on the ward, the hospital chaplain, or the bereavement service; or try the hospital's Patient Advice and Liaison (PALS) Officer.

Here are some other ideas:

- Make an entry for your baby in your hospital's book of remembrance; again ask on the ward or speak to the chaplain
- Plant flowers or a tree in your garden or a local garden of remembrance
- Light a candle on anniversaries and other 'special' days
- Add a message to the forget-me-not meadow on our website: miscarriageassociation.org.uk
- Buy something special in memory of your baby
- Write a letter or poem for your baby
- Make a donation to a favourite charity

“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 the Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society (SANDS). Contact us for details (see *page 11*).

“The forget-me-not meadow is a wonderful way to express our loss and to remember this most difficult time.”

Yours 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 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 telephone helpline, a volunteer support service, an online support forum and a range of helpful leaflets on all aspects of miscarriage.

Tel: 01924 200799;

www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk
17 Wentworth Terrace, Wakefield
WF1 3QW

The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

can help you find a counsellor or psychotherapist.

Tel: 01455 883300;

www.counselling.co.uk

BACP House, 15 St John's Business
Park, Lutterworth LE17 4HB

Relate can help with relationship problems.

Tel: 0300 100 1234;

www.relate.org.uk

Relate, Premier House, Carolina
Court, Lakeside, Doncaster, DN4 5RA

The Samaritans offer someone to talk to in confidence, whenever you need it.

Tel: 08457 909090;

www.samaritans.org.uk

Useful reading

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

Miscarriage: Women's experiences and needs, by Christine Moulder, published by Routledge 2001, ISBN: 0 415 25489 2

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

When a baby dies: the experience of late miscarriage, stillbirth and neonatal death, by Nancy Kohner, published by Routledge 2001, ISBN: 0 415 25276 8

Leaflets published by the Miscarriage Association

- Men and miscarriage
- Late miscarriage: the experience of second trimester loss
- Ectopic pregnancy
- Molar pregnancy (hydatidiform mole)
- Pregnancy loss and infertility
- Talking to children about pregnancy loss (pdf only)
- 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



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