



My Pregnancy Journey

Early Pregnancy Loss

The loss of a pregnancy that happens during the first 13 weeks of pregnancy is often called an early pregnancy loss or miscarriage. There may be different medical terms used when there is a pregnancy loss. Some of these terms could be upsetting or confusing. Wellstar hopes to provide you with the information and support you need as you are coping with this loss. Your healthcare team is available as a resource during this difficult time if you have questions.

For some, an early pregnancy loss is a devastating event and they may take time to recover. There is no right or wrong way to grieve a pregnancy loss. For women who know they are pregnant, approximately 10 to 15% of pregnancies end in miscarriage. More often, early pregnancy loss occurs prior to knowledge of the pregnancy.

Signs of miscarriage can include:

- Bleeding or spotting. For some, it may seem like a heavy period
- Cramps similar to a heavy period
- Moderate to severe abdominal pain
- Lack of pregnancy symptoms

Unfortunately, there is nothing that can be done to stop a miscarriage once it has occurred. The focus of treatment will be on your health and recovery. We do not always know what causes a miscarriage, but your healthcare provider will discuss with you any known causes or factors.

While we do not know the cause of most miscarriages, some may be caused by:

- Genetic factors, or problems with chromosomes
- Hormonal factors, such as low progesterone
- Uterine or cervical factors
- Infections, like sexually transmitted infections and listeriosis

Early pregnancy loss is typically diagnosed with a physical exam and an ultrasound. There may be a blood test to check for hCG (human chorionic gonadotropin). A low or decreasing level of hCG can mean loss of the pregnancy.

When you experience a pregnancy loss, some of the tissue may remain in the uterus. This tissue may need to be removed, and there are different options for this treatment.

Management of miscarriage

Once a miscarriage has been confirmed by your healthcare provider, you will discuss the different options on how to proceed. Your provider may recommend:

1. One option is referred to as “watch and wait,” which allows the miscarriage to progress naturally. Typically, you can be home while the miscarriage progresses. This usually happens within a couple of weeks.
2. Another option is using medication that helps your body pass tissue still in the uterus. Side effects include cramping pain, diarrhea and nausea. You may be asked to stay in the hospital until the tissue has passed or be allowed to go home.
3. Dilation and curettage (also called D&C) is a procedure to remove any remaining tissue from the uterus. Your provider widens your cervix and removes the tissue. This procedure is typically done in a hospital outpatient setting.

Recovery from miscarriage

It may take a few weeks to a month to recover from a miscarriage. Having a miscarriage can be physically and emotionally exhausting. Be sure to give yourself time to rest and recover. Strong period-like cramps and bleeding that lasts for two to three weeks may occur. It is likely you will pass tissue and/or small clots. Most women will get their period again four to six weeks after a miscarriage.

You will be advised not to use tampons or have sexual intercourse for approximately one to two weeks after an early pregnancy loss. This is to help prevent infection.

Call your provider right away if you have any of the following symptoms:

- Heavy bleeding (soaking more than two maxi pads per hour for more than two hours in a row)
- Fever
- Chills
- Severe pain

Coping after early pregnancy loss

We are very sorry you have experienced a pregnancy loss. Pregnancy loss can impact people differently, regardless of when the loss has occurred. There is no right way to grieve, and it is important to take time to heal. There is no clear timeline for grieving and many people experience a variety of emotions. Listed below are common grief responses after loss:

| Common emotional responses | Physical changes caused by grief |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shocked/confused/denial • Sad/tearful • Numb/empty • Relieved • Anger • Guilt • Worried • Lonely/afraid • Loss of interest | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling very tired • Difficulty sleeping or sleeping a lot • Weight loss or weight gain • Loss of appetite or overeating • Difficulty concentrating |

Other feelings or experiences after a pregnancy loss

- Finding it difficult or painful to see pregnant women or newborn babies
- Wanting to talk about the miscarriage all the time or finding it too painful to discuss. It may seem like no one understands how you feel
- Accepting the loss or searching for the reason behind the loss
- You are not just grieving the loss of your pregnancy but of the plans, hopes and dreams you had for your family

Ways to care for yourself

- Allow yourself time to rest, eat a healthy diet and resume physical activity as instructed by your provider.
- Create memories: Some find it comforting in naming the baby, even if the gender was unknown. Others also save the positive pregnancy test and any baby items already purchased.
- Be kind to yourself. It is OK to feel your sadness but also allow yourself to experience happiness and joy.
- Find support through close friends, support groups, a counselor or spiritual/religious leader. Remember friends or family may not know the right things to say. Even when they mean well, they will not always get it right.

You may also find comfort by:

- Lighting a candle on holidays/special days
- Writing a letter or journaling your feelings
- Having a service or memorial to allow yourself to say goodbye
- Creating yearly rituals honoring your pregnancy
- Planting a tree or small garden
- Purchasing a birthstone or small pendant

Partner's response

Couples grieve differently, and at times, this can cause a strain on your relationship. Try to be understanding of the different coping styles and be supportive of each other. Some prefer to not share their feelings, while others may be ready to talk about the loss. Some may return to work or hobbies immediately, while others may find it difficult to return to work or focus on activities. Some partners focus on “being strong” while others may not know how to react. Grief can place a strain on even the best relationships. No matter which way you and your partner cope, be respectful and sensitive to each other's needs and feelings during this time.

Pregnancy after miscarriage

Choosing to have another pregnancy is something you will need to discuss with your partner and provider. You may be ready to try again soon, you may feel you are not ready just yet or you may not want to try again. Giving yourself the time you need to grieve is important. If you are ready to try again, it is typically advised to wait until after you have had one period for a healthier outcome.

Finding support

- Wellstar Pregnancy and Infant Loss Support Group: **1 (866) 462-8449**
 - Join us on the second Tuesday of each month from 7 to 8:30pm via Microsoft Teams
 - To RSVP, please call 1-866-462-8449 and press 2
- Rachel's Gift: **www.rachelsgift.org/**
- Postpartum Support International: **links.wellstar.org/GriefPP**
- Share Pregnancy and Infant Loss Support: **www.nationalshare.org**
- Star Legacy Foundation: **www.starlegacyfoundation.org/family-support/**
- You can request assistance from your OB office for help with FMLA (Family and Medical Leave Act) forms. If you do not already have forms, please contact the human resources department at your employer.

(FMLA allows eligible employees to take unpaid, job-protected leave for specified family and medical reasons, including birth, loss of a child or care of a family member.)

Those grieving a loss may be more likely to have lingering feelings of depression, sadness and anxiety that make daily activities difficult. It is important to seek help and support from your doctor or counselor if this occurs.

For additional help, contact the National Perinatal/Postpartum Depression Hotline: **1 (800) PPD-MOMS (1-800-773-6667)**



Wellstar

WS0788_REV04.21