

## **Miscarriage and Its Management**

**Spotting (light vaginal bleeding) in early pregnancy** is not always a sign of miscarriage and may happen when the fertilized egg implants itself in the uterus. In about half the cases, the pregnancy will continue normally. Your doctor may send you for an ultrasound or other tests to find out what might be going on.

### **Why Miscarriage Happens**

Most happen by chance and are usually due to one-time problems with the genes that prevent the fetus from developing normally. Miscarriage is not caused by bending, stretching, carrying heavy weights, having sex, working long hours or having an emotional upset.

### **What to Expect**

When a miscarriage happens, your uterus contracts to push out the pregnancy tissue. You may have severe cramps and pain, heavy bleeding that may include clots, or pass the placenta (may look like blood clots or liver). These symptoms usually lessen within a few days and disappear within seven days. To relieve the pain, your doctor may advise you to take acetaminophen (Tylenol®), ibuprofen (Advil®) or aspirin with codeine (222®). For the bleeding, use sanitary napkins, not tampons.

### **How Miscarriage is Treated**

If you have a miscarriage, the pregnancy tissue may pass from your body on its own, usually within two weeks, but sometimes longer. Once the tissue has been passed, an ultrasound is done to ensure that the miscarriage is complete (all the tissue has left the body). Sometimes, the pregnancy tissue needs to be removed. This can be done with medication (called misoprostol) that stimulates your uterus to pass the tissue. Another option is surgery. Both methods are effective and safe. With your doctor, you can decide what's best for you.

If you have an Rh negative blood type (A, B, AB, or O negative) you may need a drug called Rh(D) immune globulin (WinRho®, RhoGAM®) that helps protect future fetuses who are Rh positive.

### **When to Seek Medical Care**

Promptly call your doctor or go the emergency department if you notice heavy or long-lasting vaginal bleeding (soaking two “maxipads” an hour for more than two hours or passing clots the size of a walnut), severe abdominal pain, fever or chills, or a bad odour from your vagina

### **Personal Care**

After a miscarriage or surgery, it's OK to have showers or baths. For about two weeks, avoid putting anything in your vagina (e.g., tampons, douche) and avoid having sex. A tight-fitting bra worn around the clock for 1–2 days may help reduce breast tenderness.

### **Your Emotions**

After a miscarriage, women feel a broad range of emotions that can be strong and long-lasting. It may take longer to recover from these effects than from the physical effects. Support from your doctor, therapist or support group can help.

### **Planning another Pregnancy**

With an uncomplicated miscarriage, you can try to get pregnant again as soon as you feel emotionally and physically ready. If there were complications, speak to your doctor for specific advice.

### **Sources:**

- 1) Deutchman M, Tubay AT, Turok D. First Trimester Bleeding. American Family Physician 2011. <http://www.aafp.org/afp/20090601/985.html>
- 2) Tulandi T. Patient Information: Miscarriage. In: UpToDate 2011. <http://www.uptodate.com/contents/patient-information-miscarriage?view=print>.

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