

## Miscarriage

### What is a miscarriage?

- ❖ A miscarriage is the loss of a pregnancy (prior to 20 weeks) before the unborn fetus (baby) can survive outside the uterus (womb).
- ❖ About one-in-four pregnancies end in miscarriage.
- ❖ Most miscarriages (75 to 80 out of every 100) happen in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy.
- ❖ Most miscarriages happen without an obvious cause.
- ❖ The development of a baby and the implantation in the uterus is a complex process. If something goes wrong, the pregnancy may fail.

### What are the symptoms of a miscarriage?

- ❖ Vaginal bleeding can be a warning sign of a miscarriage.
- ❖ There may be period-like cramping pain in the lower pelvis.
- ❖ For some women, pain is the only sign that they are miscarrying.
- ❖ A few women will have no symptoms at all.

### What are the different types of miscarriage?

There are various types of miscarriage. An ultrasound is used to determine the type of miscarriage.

**Complete miscarriage** – the pregnancy has ended and both the fetus and the remaining pregnancy tissue have been passed. The uterus is empty.

**Incomplete miscarriage** – some but not all of the pregnancy and remaining tissue has been passed. If this happens there may be a lot of bleeding or an infection may develop.

**Missed miscarriage** – the pregnancy has failed and the fetus has stopped growing. Pregnancy symptoms, such as morning sickness or breast tenderness, may ease or completely disappear. The failed pregnancy and tissue may remain in the uterus for days or weeks, before the bleeding or pain starts.

### What are my treatment options?

Unfortunately, if you are having a miscarriage, there is no emergency care that will save your pregnancy

If some of the pregnancy tissue remains in the uterus after a miscarriage, your doctor may refer you to a specialist doctor for further management options.

### What should I do after a miscarriage?

- ❖ Rest - This allows you time to recover physically and emotionally.
- ❖ Pain relief - You may need some mild painkillers, such as paracetamol, if you are in pain. If you have been prescribed any other medications, take them as instructed and be sure to finish all antibiotics, even if you are feeling better after two or three days.
- ❖ Personal hygiene - Use sanitary pads, not tampons, while you are bleeding.
- ❖ Avoid sex- Until all bleeding has stopped.

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## How long will I bleed after a miscarriage?

- ❖ Most women bleed approximately five to fourteen days.
- ❖ The bleeding is heavy in the first few days, gradually easing off and becomes light and watery.
- ❖ Your next period should come approximately four to six weeks later and may be heavy and abnormal.
- ❖ Most of the problems that cause miscarriage happen by chance and there is no way of knowing if it will happen again. In most cases, the next pregnancy goes to full term.

## How will I feel about the miscarriage?

- ❖ There is no 'right way' to feel after a miscarriage.
- ❖ A range of feelings is normal, and they may remain for some time.
- ❖ Your feelings may include sadness, anger, disbelief, disappointment, and a sense of isolation.
- ❖ Your body will go through changes as your hormone levels change and this may make you feel very emotional.

## Can I prevent another miscarriage?

There is no special treatment to prevent further miscarriage, although there is some general advice.

- ❖ Stay healthy - Don't drink alcohol, smoke or use drugs.
- ❖ Take folic acid - This helps with the formation of the baby's nervous system. Talk to your local doctor regarding the right dose for you.
- ❖ Diet & Exercise - Maintain a healthy diet and weight by exercising regularly.

## What if I have had more than one miscarriage?

Women who have had three miscarriages in a row are at risk of miscarrying again. If this has happened to you, you can be referred by your local doctor to see a specialist for further tests, counselling and management of future pregnancies.

## What follow-up should I receive?

- ❖ You should have a check-up with your doctor six weeks after your miscarriage to make sure there are no problems and that your uterus has returned to its normal size.
- ❖ You can also ask any questions about your miscarriage.
- ❖ If you have any other concerns, see your local doctor.

## What if I am not improving?

- ❖ In a medical emergency go to your nearest hospital emergency department or call an ambulance (dial 000).
- ❖ For other medical problems see your local doctor or health care professional
- ❖ Call EPAS at your local hospital

## EPAS Contact Numbers

**John Hunter Hospital EPAS**  
Mon – Fri 8am – 3pm  
(02) 49855031

**Maitland Hospital EPAS**  
Mon – Fri 9am – 4pm  
(02) 498524247