Understanding Miscarriage

Miscarrying at home: what to expect

Once signs of a miscarriage begin, most miscarriages will be complete within the next three days. The initial signs of miscarriage include bleeding and cramping that will most often come and go, and at some point will start to increase. The cramping will begin to intensify into stronger contractions at which point your body is working to open your cervix necessary to pass your baby and the surrounding tissue. You can expect to pass anywhere from a quarter-size to a fist size clot of blood and tissue, at which point your cramping should diminish as well as your bleeding into a period-like flow. It is important that you have another awake adult with you or in the next room while you are miscarrying.

- If you saturate (fully soak) a heavy-flow pad in one hour or less, please call or page. If you pass more than one fist-sized clot, this is also too much blood and a reason to call/page. If this occurs, your midwife will likely recommend going to the hospital as further measures (medications or D&C) may be needed to stop your bleeding.

Things to have on hand

- Rescue remedy (or another calming herb like chamomile or valerian)
- Raspberry and Nettle leaf tea (bring a large pot of water to boil, turn off heat, add loose nettle and raspberry leaf, allow to infuse overnight- drink 4 large cups daily for the next week)
- Coconut water, homemade electrolyte drink (honey, sea salt, lemon)

Miscarrying can be an extremely difficult experience emotionally. Our bodies do know how to miscarry and it is most often a very natural process for the physical body, though not without pain. There are times when more medical management is required. If your bleeding is too heavy, if your miscarriage is incomplete, or if you are miscarrying in the second trimester, more assistance may be needed.

Physical healing after a miscarriage

Your Activity Level: Your body has gone through a lot and will need rest. We recommend taking off one to two days of work following your miscarriage; more may be needed depending on how far along in your pregnancy you were, or if complications arose. You may resume normal exercise 2 weeks following your miscarriage. Walks are a great way to move your body and process emotions before 2 weeks. Catching up on sleep, eating well and staying hydrated are very important in the weeks following your miscarriage in order for your body to heal well.
Nutrition: Continue your prenatal vitamin at least through your next menstrual cycle. Red raspberry leaf tea is a uterine tonic that is high in calcium. You can continue to drink this for nutrition and nurturance to your uterus.

Depending on your blood loss, Iron foods and/or supplements may be recommended. Nettles tea is a great source of Iron and is a general body tonic. Red meat, green leafy vegetables, blackstrap molasses and dried fruit are all great sources of iron. Floradix is a liquid herbal Iron supplement that is non-constipating and easy for your body to absorb. It is available at health food stores.

After miscarriage: Bleeding should decrease daily and slowly taper off in the first 3 to 10 days, and will be like a period then get lighter both in color and flow. Bleeding has most often subsided by 2 weeks, during which time your uterus returns to normal. To help prevent infection avoid tampons, intercourse, baths, spas and swimming pools. Monitor your temperature for signs of infection. At any time if along with pain and bleeding, there is an unpleasant smell or you have a high temperature, call your midwife.

Warning signs/Reasons to call your midwife:
- Bright red bleeding or an increase in flow 3 days or more after your miscarriage
- Foul-smelling discharge
- Saturating a pad in one hour or less
- * if you are bleeding heavily or feeling faint please call for help and/or go to your nearest emergency room

It is recommended to hold off on penetrative sex until after your bleeding has stopped in order to decrease the risk of infection. We recommend waiting until you are physically and emotionally ready.

Bathing in your own clean tub is fine, please no swimming until after your bleeding has stopped.

Other Reasons to Call Your Midwife:
- Fever over 100.4 degrees F
- Severe menstrual-like cramping

Your period will return within four to six weeks, but could be sooner. We recommend waiting at least one full cycle before conceiving again. Physical recovery is most often complete 2 weeks following your miscarriage, however emotional recovery takes longer. Give yourselves time to grieve, seek out support, and call your midwife if you feel like your grief is turning into depression.

Grieving after miscarriage

Miscarriage is both the birth and death of a baby, bringing often unexpected shock and grief. Grief is not a linear process, and can include anger, confusion, numbness, sadness and even guilt. These feelings may surface initially or may arise unexpectedly months later after a triggering experience. Please know that these are all normal, even healthy responses to the loss of a baby. You may find comfort and help healing by expressing your grief. This could mean naming your baby, crying, talking, drawing, keeping a journal or holding a special ceremony to honor their life. You may also consider counseling to help you process your grief. As your midwives, we are here to support you through this difficult journey.