

Women's Services

General information about miscarriage

Contact telephone numbers

- Daphne ward (08:00 20:00 Monday - Friday. 08:30 14:00 Saturday - Sunday): 01223 217636
- Ward L4 (all other times): 01223 348500

Introduction

Sadly your pregnancy has resulted in miscarriage, occurring in the first trimester (that is below 13 weeks gestation). We are very sorry that this has happened, and hope that the information in this leaflet will be of some help to you and your partner.

Miscarriage in early pregnancy is very common, with as many as one in four confirmed pregnancies ending this way. It is also something that is not really talked about.

The staff on The Early Pregnancy Unit (EPU) on Daphne ward hope to help you through this distressing time by:

- Explaining the options available to you now.
- Describing possible events, in order to help prepare you.
- Being available to give you advice over the telephone. When the unit is closed ward L4, the main gynaecology ward, is available for you to contact. Contact telephone numbers are found at the top of this leaflet.
- Providing written information for you, in the form of this leaflet, to help you understand what is happening to you.

Although miscarriage happens to so many women, it is a very individual experience, characterised by common circumstances: bleeding, discomfort/pain and the loss of the pregnancy. This may be by the passing of blood clots, tissue or even a recognisable foetus.

Depending on the circumstances, including how clinically well you are at the time when you were seen on Daphne ward, you will have been offered three choices to help you with the next part of the miscarriage:

- Expectant management
- Surgery-evacuation of retained products of conception (ERPOC)
- Medical management of miscarriage

This leaflet aims to help you understand more about miscarriage generally, where to seek more support to help you to come to terms with losing your baby, and about planning future pregnancies.

Terms to describe miscarriage

Every woman's miscarriage is individual, experienced under different circumstances. However there are common medical terms to describe miscarriage, which you may hear.

- **Threatened miscarriage:** there is bleeding, sometimes accompanied by pain, often this is unexplained and no cause for either is found. The neck of the womb (os) is closed, and an ultrasound scan confirms the pregnancy is on-going.
- **Delayed/missed miscarriage:** the pregnancy has ended, either the baby has died or the embryo never developed, but you have not expelled the pregnancy. You may have begun to feel less pregnant, with a lessening of any symptoms, such as tender breasts and nausea, but you have not had any further symptoms of the miscarriage, such as bleeding or cramping pelvic pain.
- **Incomplete miscarriage:** the miscarriage is inevitable, but not all the tissue from the pregnancy has been passed.
- **Complete miscarriage:** when all the tissue from the pregnancy has been passed.
- **Ectopic pregnancy:** a pregnancy that starts to develop outside the womb, usually in the fallopian tube.
- **Pregnancy of unknown location:** a pregnancy that is not viable, but we are unable to be absolutely certain whether it is ectopic or intrauterine.

Causes of miscarriage

Although miscarriage in early pregnancy is a common experience, it is often impossible to know why it has occurred, and the causes of miscarriage are still not completely understood.

On the EPU we understand it is very hard to accept that no definite answer can be given to you, about why your miscarriage has happened.

It is unlikely that anything you may have done will have caused the miscarriage.

The main causes for early miscarriage are thought to be:

Genetic

It is thought that as many as half of all early miscarriages are due to chance chromosomal abnormalities. Fertilisation is very complex, and some ovum (egg) and sperm, by chance, may be abnormal resulting in a vulnerable pregnancy, resulting in early miscarriage. This is seen as nature's healthy response to these abnormalities.

Hormonal

Getting pregnant, and staying pregnant, is dependent on the correct balance of reproductive hormones. Any hormonal imbalance, which leads to miscarriage, is most likely to be a one-off event that is unlikely to reoccur.

Immunological

Some women may have substances in their blood, called antibodies, which may cause abnormal clotting in the blood flow to the pregnancy, leading to miscarriage. These are uncommon, but are tested for in women who have three or more miscarriages, one after the other.

Infection

Whilst minor infections, such as colds, are not harmful, it is thought that high fever may lead to miscarriage. It is therefore wise to avoid contact with someone who is known to have an infectious illness.

Anatomical

It is very rare, but certain abnormalities of the womb or cervix may cause miscarriage.

Other risk factors include:

- Pregnancy over the age of 40 years
- Diabetes or thyroid problems, which are not well controlled
- Smoking

Tests for the cause of miscarriage

Investigations into the cause of miscarriage are only performed after a woman has suffered three consecutive miscarriages. This is because miscarriage is most likely to have been a result of chance, and you are still more likely to go on and have a successful pregnancy, next time, than you are to suffer a miscarriage.

Even after having three miscarriages, the majority of women go on to have normal pregnancies resulting in a live birth. However tests are advised to detect any treatable problems that might be causing the miscarriages. Whilst these may not be common, their treatment might improve the chances of successful future pregnancies.

If indicated, you will be offered tests and an appointment with a consultant Gynaecologist specialising in this field.

If you feel that you, or your partner, need more help coming to terms with losing your baby, here are some contact numbers, which may be of use:

- Karen Burgess, Counsellor Women's services: 01223 349327 (answer phone)
- Email: rosiecounsellingservice@addenbrookes.nhs.uk
- The Miscarriage Association: 01924 200799 (Monday-Friday 09:00 – 16:00)
www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk



We are currently working towards a smoke free site. Smoking is only permitted in the designated smoking areas.

For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169

Help with this leaflet:



If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio format, please ask the department to contact Patient Information: 01223 216032 or patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Polish

Jeżeli chciałbyś uzyskać te informacje w innym języku, w dużej czcionce lub w formacie audio, poproś pracownika oddziału o kontakt z biurem Informacji Pacjenta (Patient Information) pod numerem telefonu: 01223 216032 lub pod adresem patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Portuguese

Se precisar desta informação noutra língua, em impressão de letras grandes ou formato áudio, por favor peça ao departamento que contacte a secção de Informação aos Doentes (Patient Information) pelo telefone 01223 216032 ou através do e-mail patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Arabic

إذا كنت تود الحصول على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، بالأحرف الكبيرة أو بشكل شريط صوتي، يمكنك أن تطلب من القسم الاتصال بمعلومات المريض على الرقم: 01223216032 أو عبر البريد الإلكتروني: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Cantonese

如您需以另一語言版本、特大字體或錄音形式索取本資料，請要求部門聯絡病人諮詢服務：電話 01223 216032，電郵地址 patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Turkish

Eğer bu bilgileri başka bir dilde veya büyük baskılı veya sesli olarak isterseniz, lütfen bulunduğunuz bölümdeki görevlilere söyleyin Hasta Bilgilendirme servisini arasinlar: 01223 216032 veya patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Urdu

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی دیگر زبان میں، بڑے الفاظ میں یا آڈیو طریقہ سے درکار ہوں تو برائے مہربانی اس شعبہ سے پیشینٹ انفارمیشن سے ذیل کے ذریعہ رابطہ کرنے کی درخواست کریں: 01223 216032 یا patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Bengali

আপনি যদি এই তথ্য অন্য কোন ভাষায়, বড় অক্ষরে বা অডিও রেকর্ডিং পেতে চান তাহলে 'প্যাশেন্ট ইনফরমেশান' এর সঙ্গে 01223 216032 নম্বরে ফোন করে বা patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk ঠিকানায় ই-মেইল করে যোগাযোগ করার জন্য ডিপার্টমেন্টটিতে অনুরোধ জানান।

Document history

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