

# Pregnancy Loss (Miscarriage)

## ***What is Pregnancy loss or Miscarriage?***

Pregnancy loss, often called miscarriage, happens when a pregnancy stops growing. This is very common. About 1 in 4 pregnancies end in a pregnancy loss, typically in the first 10 weeks.

## ***What causes Pregnancy loss?***

A pregnancy loss is almost never caused by something you did. Past abortions, sex, exercise, mild falls, spicy foods, and most medications do not cause an early pregnancy loss. There is a higher chance of pregnancy loss with older age, some chronic illnesses, some infections, changes in the uterus, and severe injury although one of the most common reasons for pregnancy loss is genetics.

When a pregnancy starts, cells divide fast to make an embryo, and sometimes errors occur. Your body notices this, and the pregnancy may stop growing.

Most types of pregnancy loss don't affect your chances of having a normal pregnancy in the future.

If you have more than 2 pregnancy losses in a row, you may be at a greater risk of future pregnancy loss. You should talk with your clinician about this.

## ***What will I see & feel when I have a Pregnancy loss?***

You may or may not have symptoms. If symptoms occur, you may have spotting/bleeding from the vagina, cramps/abdominal pain, back pressure and you may pass small or large clots.

These symptoms may be minor or severe. They may last a few days or weeks. Contact your clinician for a visit as soon as you notice bleeding, cramping, and/or pain.

These symptoms can be part of a normal pregnancy, but it is a good idea to have more tests done.

If you have very heavy bleeding and soak through more than 2 maxi pads per hour for 2 hours in a row, or a fever above 101°F, go to the emergency room.

## ***What happens during a Pregnancy loss?***

During a pregnancy loss, the pregnancy leaves the uterus through the cervix and the vagina. An ultrasound image of the uterus may assist in finding out what is going on. If a pregnancy loss has started, it is not possible to stop your body from continuing to pass the pregnancy tissue.

If the pregnancy tissue does not pass on its own, or if you would prefer to help your body pass the tissue more quickly, you have options. Your clinician can give you a medication that you can take at home to help pass the tissue or you can have a procedure in the hospital to remove the pregnancy tissue.

## ***After a Pregnancy loss:***

Pregnancy loss can be hard. It is okay to give yourself time to heal and check in with your emotions.

There is no right or wrong way to feel, and there is no "normal" amount of time that you will need to recover. Your period should return in 4 - 8 weeks. If you haven't had a period within 12 weeks you should make an appointment. Speak with your clinician to learn how to prevent another pregnancy until you are ready, or about becoming pregnant again. If you have a hard time going back to normal activities, speak with your clinician so that you can get the support you need.

# What Are My Choices?

## Early Pregnancy Loss (Miscarriage) Treatment

|  | Watch & Wait  | Medication  | Procedure   |
|--|---|---|---|
| How does it work?                          | You wait for the pregnancy tissue to pass on its own. This happens with cramps and bleeding with clots.   | Pills called misoprostol (Cytotec) can be used to help to make the pregnancy tissue pass. You use these pills at home.  | A clinician removes the pregnancy tissue using a technique called suction dilation and curettage. This is typically done with anesthesia. |
| What will happen?                          | You wait for the cramps and bleeding to happen. This may occur any time. The bleeding and cramps may be much heavier than a period, with heavy bleeding for at least a few hours. Lighter bleeding often lasts 1 to 2 weeks. It may stop and start a few times. | Take pain pills one hour before the misoprostol pills to ease any cramping or bleeding. Misoprostol may cause nausea, diarrhea, and/or a low fever. The bleeding and cramps may be much heavier than a period. This usually starts about 2 to 6 hours after taking the pills, but may take longer. Lighter bleeding often lasts 1 to 2 weeks and it may stop and start a few times. | The clinician removes the pregnancy tissue surgically. You may have light bleeding and cramping for 3-7 days.                             |
| How painful is it?                         | You may have intense cramps. Pain pills and a heating pad can help relieve painful cramps.  | You will have intense cramps. Pain pills and a heating pad can help reduce cramps.  | After the procedure, you may have mild to moderate cramps.  |
| How well does it work?                     | This works 70-80% of the time. It works better if you already have had some bleeding.   | 60-70% success by 2 days and 80-90% by 8 days.  | Suction dilation and curettage works 90-100% of the time.   |
| How long does it take?                     | This may take a few weeks.  | Typically days to weeks.  | The uterus is emptied during the procedure, which last about 5-10 minutes.  |
| What if it takes too long or doesn't work? | If it takes too long, you can return to your clinician's office at any time for pills or a suction procedure.   | If it does not work or takes too long, you can return to your clinician's office for a suction procedure or another dose of pills.  | In the rare case that it does not work, you can return for another suction dilation and curettage.  |
| Is it safe?                                | Yes. All three treatment options are safe.  |   |   |
| Can I still have children afterwards?      | Yes. These treatments don't prevent you from getting pregnant or staying pregnant. Once the pregnancy loss is over you can start trying to get pregnant as soon as you feel ready.  |   |   |