



JOONDALUP  
HEALTH CAMPUS

## Support Numbers:

Your Family Doctor

Joondalup Health Campus  
Maternity Ward  
Ph: 9400 9299

Woman's Health Works  
Ph: 9300 1566

SIDS and Kids WA

**24 Hour Infant Loss Support Line: 1800 686 780 (Freecall)**

Email: [perth@sidsandkids.org](mailto:perth@sidsandkids.org)

[www.sidsaustralia.org.au/wa](http://www.sidsaustralia.org.au/wa)



## MISCARRIAGE

Don't weep at my grave,  
for I am not there  
I've a date with a butterfly  
to dance in the air  
I'll be singing in the sunshine,  
wild and free  
Playing tag with the wind,  
while I'm waiting for thee

Anon.

This pamphlet has been produced by the midwives at Joondalup Health Campus to assist women and their families to understand what is happening during a miscarriage. We hope to clarify some of the medical terms you may have heard, give you an insight into the care you can expect from our experienced staff, discuss child bearing in the future and provide you with contacts for the support services available within our community.

Research has helped to discover some reasons why women miscarry, but there is also an element of mystery offering no answers. What scientists do know is that miscarriage is a natural phenomenon of the body responding to an incompatible environment between mother and foetus. We have often heard the term "Survival of the fittest". If for some reason the mother, uterus, placenta or the baby is weakened, a miscarriage may result.

It is estimated that one in four women who become pregnant will have one or more miscarriages and 75% of miscarriages happen within the first 12 weeks. So if this happens to you, know that you are definitely not alone and many of the health professionals caring for you will understand from personal experience.



Following a miscarriage you may feel physically and emotionally drained from the blood loss and stress. It may be advisable to take an iron supplement to enhance new blood production. It may also be advisable to rest your body and "heart" from sexual intercourse until after the first normal period.

Normal vaginal bleeding can last from one to 21 days becoming lighter as the days progress. If bleeding is heavy and you are experiencing painful cramps, you need to contact your doctor or hospital for further assessment.

**The majority of women who miscarry go on to have a successful pregnancy. It is recommended to allow your body time to regain its strength and rhythm prior to trying to conceive again.**

This pamphlet has just touched on many of the questions that you and your family may have regarding a miscarriage. Please feel free to contact us at any time with any questions you may have regarding your experiences. Over the page are the contact numbers not only for the hospital but also other resources within our community.



## Support and Care Following a Miscarriage

Miscarriage involves a tsunami of emotions. Everyone of them is normal and the more advanced the pregnancy the stronger the feelings may be experienced.

It is important to know that there is caring and professional support for you and your family from beginning to end by our team of experienced midwives. If you want time alone with your baby and significant others, we have a space created for this purpose. This space can also be used for simple services with one of our Chaplains or your own spiritual leader.

Investigations on the baby and placenta are offered to the parents and with their consent, blood and tissue are tested to detect any reason for the miscarriage. More often than not there is no detectable reason. Chromosomal tests can determine the sex of the infant. When the results are available your doctor will contact you. King Edward Memorial Hospital with your consent, can cremate your baby and either place the ashes in their or our Memorial Garden or you can collect them from one of our Chaplains.

Medical language is often used when the medical team and midwives communicate, but this can often leave the woman and her family wondering what is being said. Here are some terms that you may hear if you are having a miscarriage.

Miscarriage is when the uterus rids the body of the infant before the 20th week of pregnancy.

Some of the terms you may hear in association with a miscarriage are:

### Threatened miscarriage

A period of time over days or weeks when there is vaginal bleeding. The amount of blood may vary from smearing through to soaking pads and severe cramps. This can be alarming and medical advice can be obtained readily from your G.P., or the Emergency Department at Joondalup Health Campus. Threatened miscarriage may lead to a miscarriage or it may settle and the pregnancy continues.

### Missed miscarriage

The infant has died and remains in the uterus.

### Spontaneous miscarriage

The uterus rids the body of the infant before the twentieth week of pregnancy and the body will return to its normal menstrual rhythm.

### Incomplete miscarriage

The uterus does not completely empty and some of the products of conception remain.

### Recurrent miscarriage

A term used when a woman has had 3 or more consecutive miscarriages. The chances of miscarrying again rise significantly for these women and referral to a specialist obstetrician or geneticist is advisable.

### Ectopic pregnancy

This develops outside the uterus, usually in one of the two fallopian tubes. In this case by the 8<sup>th</sup> week symptoms of bleeding, severe abdominal pain and general unwell ness may begin. This is a serious condition that can be life threatening. Surgery is required to remove the embryo and often the fallopian tube. A majority of women have future normal pregnancies if the remaining fallopian tube is healthy.



### Stillbirth

When a baby dies after the 20<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy or weighs more than 400 grams.

### Tests and Procedures:

#### Abdominal Ultrasound

A non-invasive test that looks at the contents of the uterus.

#### Dilatation and Curettage or D&C

A short procedure done under a general anaesthetic in theatre. The cervix is dilated and the contents of the uterus gently scraped to prevent infection of the remaining contents. Bleeding is usually minimal after a D&C and discharge from the hospital can be within a few hours.

#### An Induced abortion

A voluntary termination of pregnancy, which may be indicated in a missed miscarriage between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> week or due to an abnormal medical condition of the mother or the baby.

#### Misoprostol

A medication in tablet form that can be placed in the vagina and when absorbed by the cervix induces miscarriage.