

## Miscarriages

### **Not so Uncommon**

Miscarriages, which are called “spontaneous abortions” by medical people, are very common. Fifteen to 20 women out of 100 will have a miscarriage. Most of them happen in the first three months of pregnancy.

### **Why Miscarriages Happen**

Most miscarriages happen because there is something wrong with the baby (fetus) from the beginning of the pregnancy. This is something that the pregnant woman has no control over. The baby usually has been dead for a number of days by the time the woman begins to bleed. Often the tissue that should develop into a baby just doesn’t grow (blighted ovum) or the baby isn’t developing normally (chromosomal abnormality). After a while, the woman’s body realizes that something is wrong and stops the pregnancy with a miscarriage. Occasionally, a woman has a miscarriage because she has an illness, like diabetes or high blood pressure that is out of control. But this is the reason for only a few women.

### **Don’t be Afraid to Try Again**

Having one or two miscarriages does not change a couple’s chance of having a baby. Your chance of having a full-term pregnancy next time you try is the same as for a woman who has never had a miscarriage. About 85% of couples go on to have a healthy pregnancy after a miscarriage. Sixty percent of people who have had more than one miscarriage will eventually have a healthy pregnancy.

### **After a Miscarriage**

When a woman becomes pregnant, she begins to imagine the baby. She asks herself, “Will it be a boy or a girl?” and “What will my baby look like?” When she miscarries, that baby is gone. It can be the same as losing any child, and the emptiness she may feel is very real. The sad feelings tend to come and go. This is normal. Don’t be afraid to cry. You are not being silly. You’ve lost something very precious. Some women don’t feel sad after a miscarriage. It is also normal for many women to feel upset for what can seem like a very long time. Often women describe feeling guilty, lonely, and angry with themselves, family members and God. Some may feel jealous of other pregnant women and women who have children. Others describe physical sensations like tightness in the chest or hollowness in the stomach. Try to find a way to say goodbye to your baby as you would with any family member who has died.

### **Three Things to Remember:**

1. Nothing you did caused it to happen
2. Chances are very good that your next pregnancy will be full-term
3. It's okay to feel sad for awhile

### **Helpful Suggestions:**

- Eat a healthy diet and stay away from alcohol, caffeine and tobacco
- Do something active every day, like walking or biking
- Be sure to get enough rest
- Talk about the baby with family and friends to let out all that is troubling you
- Write in a journal or write letters or poems as an outlet for your feelings
- Read books and articles that can provide you with some understanding and comfort
- Try not to make big decisions when you are upset
- You and your partner may deal differently with the loss. Some studies show that men tend to cry less, want to talk less about the loss, express more anger, and attempt to cope by returning to work as soon as possible. Partners have difficulty being in the role of “comforter” and being unable to change what happened. Keep talking with each other.
- It may be difficult to see the people you know best. Sometimes these people will say things that are hurtful, even though they do not mean to hurt you. Often people want to help but they don't know how. You will need to let people know how you feel and how they can help.

### **Time to Recover**

You may not want to become pregnant right away. Counselors often advise that you wait until the feelings of emptiness and pain are less. Medically, it is safe to try again after a woman has had one normal menstrual period. However, it may take much longer before a woman feels emotionally ready for another pregnancy.

### **Resource and Support**

SHARE: Pregnancy and Infant Loss Support Inc (1-800-821-6819) [www.nationalshareoffice.com](http://www.nationalshareoffice.com)

New Mexico Grief Services Program: 272-3397 Offers free individual and family counseling after pregnancy loss.

*University Midwifery Associates 1/2004*