

Expectant management of your miscarriage



We are sorry that you have received bad news about your pregnancy. We hope that this information is of some help at this difficult time. It explains what expectant management is, why it may be suitable for you and what treatment options are available, if necessary.

What is expectant management?

There are several ways to manage your miscarriage and one of these is to let nature take its course. This is known as expectant management. It allows your body to miscarry the pregnancy in a natural way without interference. Studies have shown that letting nature take its course is a safe alternative to surgery and is associated with fewer risks.

Why haven't I miscarried already?

Often women do not miscarry naturally until they are approximately 12 weeks pregnant. This is because pregnancy hormones are being produced by your ovaries which tells your body that you are still pregnant. These hormones only last for about 12 weeks and then the placenta takes over. However, if the pregnancy has stopped developing the placenta will not produce these hormones and the body usually starts to miscarry.

When will my miscarriage happen?

It is difficult to say when the miscarriage will happen. For some women the miscarriage will occur within a few days, for others the process may take longer, sometimes even up to 12 weeks. As all women are different their experiences will vary. This makes it difficult to predict what it will be like for you.

What if it doesn't work or I get fed up waiting?

If the miscarriage does not happen naturally (around two in 10 women), you will be given the option of having tablets to help the miscarriage occur, or an operation to empty your uterus (womb). We would need to see you again in the clinic to arrange this.

Will I see anything?

It is possible that you may see the pregnancy sac which can be "jelly-like" in appearance. It is up to you what you do with this. Some women like to bury it in the garden, however many women miscarry into the toilet.

What will the bleeding be like?

Some women describe episodes of bleeding before the actual miscarriage happens. This can be very confusing as you may not know if the miscarriage has happened or not. The amount of bleeding depends on how advanced your pregnancy is. Some women experience a great deal of bleeding with clots (lumps) of blood coming away. It is a lot heavier than a period and can be frightening.

Will it hurt?

The uterus needs to contract to miscarry the pregnancy and some women describe this as labour pains. We can give you some pain-killers to take home with you. If you need further pain-killers you can come into hospital.

How long will the bleeding last?

The bleeding can go on for up to three weeks after the miscarriage. It should get lighter, like the tail end of a period. You should not use tampons for the bleeding, just sanitary pads. It is normal to experience some tummy cramps and even some small clots after the miscarriage, but if:

- the bleeding becomes very heavy
- the pain becomes very severe, or
- you have an unpleasant smelling discharge

see your GP as you may need antibiotics.

How will I know the miscarriage has definitely happened?

You will be given a follow-up appointment in The Early Pregnancy Unit in two weeks to see how you are. The miscarriage may not have happened by then, however we would still like to see you. We will be able to tell you whether the miscarriage has happened at this appointment. We also give you a pregnancy test to do at home. Once this is negative, we can be sure the miscarriage is complete. If you don't attend this appointment, we will ring you to see how you are. Please make sure we have the number you prefer us to use.

When should I seek help?

If you feel faint or dizzy with the bleeding or have severe pain you should telephone the ward on the number given at the end of this leaflet. If the matter is not urgent and you would like some advice you can telephone the Early Pregnancy Unit within normal working hours, or leave a message on the answer phone. The staff in The Early Pregnancy Unit will be happy to speak to you.

Can I go to work?

You can go to work if you wish, however it is advisable to be able to return home if the miscarriage starts whilst you are there. Many women feel very sad after a miscarriage and need extra time off to recover. In this case, you will need to see your family doctor to arrange a sick note.

When can I get back to normal activities?

Having a bath / shower after the miscarriage is safe, although we recommend avoiding swimming until after the bleeding has stopped. You should avoid intercourse for at least a week after the bleeding has stopped. If you have intercourse again before the follow-up pregnancy test, we recommend using contraception to avoid confusion with your result.

When do I get my period again?

Your periods should return 4-6 weeks after the bleeding stops, but this does vary.

When can I try again?

There is no "right" time to start trying again, but we would advise waiting until your next normal period before trying for a baby again and until you both feel ready.

Will it happen again?

The chances of a successful pregnancy next time are very high. Stopping smoking and reducing your alcohol intake both increase your chance of having a healthy pregnancy. If you are trying to conceive you should be taking folic acid which has been shown to reduce the risk of neural tube defects such as spina bifida.

If you have non-urgent questions, please contact:

The Early Pregnancy Unit on 01872 252686

If you require urgent assistance please contact:

Gynaecology ward on 01872 253163

Other sources of help:

The Miscarriage Association

Tel: 01924 200799

www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk

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If you would like this leaflet in large print, braille, audio version or in another language, please contact the General Office on 01872 252690

