

Coping with grief

Grief is a process, not a state. There is no set time limit as people journey through their grief, so be patient and kind to yourself.

The grief process has different phases:

Shock and Numbness

Searching and Yearning

Disorientation

Reorganization/Resolution

You can find detailed information about the phases and characteristics of grief in the resources listed at the end of this brochure.

Consider the following suggestions as you mourn the loss of your pregnancy:

- Make a list of questions to ask your doctor about what has happened.
- Share your feelings or have your feelings affirmed by your partner, doctor, nurse, social worker, chaplain or special friend.
- Collect mementos and keepsakes.
- Gather information about support available in your community.

Care for yourself

The physical and emotional impact of pregnancy loss can cause you to feel very tired and you may have difficulty coping, so rest when you can and eat a balanced diet.

If you feel constantly overwhelmed, or unable to cope, contact your doctor, nurse, chaplain, or social worker for help.

Seek medical attention if you have:

- Excessive bleeding, soaking 1 or more pads an hour, for the last 3 hours
- Bleeding that is lasting longer than 6 weeks
- Feelings of sadness or difficulty coping that is lasting longer than 6 weeks
- Severe pain
- Signs of infection, such as:
 - Fever (temperature at or above 38.5°C or 101.3°F)
 - Vaginal discharge with a bad odour

Resources for support and information

Spiritual and Religious Care Humber River Health

Our Spiritual Care Providers offers resources and support for all losses. They can provide a blessing and/or assist in the Fetal Burial Program for those who have suffered an early pregnancy loss.

Early Pregnancy Clinic Humber River Health

Tel: (416) 242-1000 ext. 21450

The clinic provides urgent assessment of women less than 13 weeks pregnant.

Pregnancy and Infant Loss Network

Tel: (915) 472-1807 or 1 (888) 301-7276

Offers a support group for perinatal loss.

Bereaved Families of Ontario

Tel: (416) 440-0290 or 1 (800) 236-6364

Offers support groups for all types of loss.

Maternal and Child Program Humber River Health

1235 Wilson Ave., Toronto, ON M3M 0B2

We are located on the 4th floor. Take the Central elevators and follow the signs to the Registration Desk.

HUMBER RIVER HEALTH
1235 Wilson Ave., Toronto, Ont., M3M 0B2

Early Pregnancy Loss



English

This information is important! If you have trouble reading this, ask someone to help you.

Italian

Queste informazioni sono importanti! Se ha difficoltà a leggere questo, chiedi aiuto a qualcuno.

Spanish

¡Esta información es importante! Si tiene dificultad en leer esto, pida que alguien le ayude.

What is early pregnancy loss?

An early pregnancy loss is the unplanned ending of a pregnancy during the first 20 weeks. About 20 to 25% of all pregnancies end in miscarriage, with most miscarriages happening before the 12th week of pregnancy. A main cause of pregnancy loss is a chromosomal abnormality of the fetus. Other possible causes include infections, hormonal disruptions, or problems with the uterine wall.

There are different types of early pregnancy losses:

Complete miscarriage: You have passed the fetus and all placental tissue from your uterus after a period of bleeding. You may have also had cramping. An ultrasound scan can confirm if your uterus is empty. Usually, you will not need any medical or surgical treatment after this type of loss.

Incomplete miscarriage: An ultrasound scan shows that there is still tissue remaining in your uterus, even after bleeding and passing of tissue. You may need medical or surgical treatment after an incomplete miscarriage.

Delayed or missed miscarriage: This is when you have had a miscarriage, but you have not passed the fetus. We may only realize the miscarriage after a routine ultrasound scan (for dating or genetic screening), or after an ultrasound your doctor requested because of spotting, bleeding or cramping.

Anembryonic pregnancy or “blighted ovum”: This is when the amniotic sac develops, but the fetus does not develop. In most cases, you have signs and symptoms of a normal pregnancy because the sac continues to grow, but an ultrasound scan shows that there is no fetus present.

Ectopic pregnancy: This pregnancy grows somewhere outside of the uterus. The most common place is in the fallopian tube, also called a “tubal pregnancy.” It can also occur in the ovary, cervix, or peritoneal cavity (outside of the stomach area). Diagnosing an ectopic pregnancy can be difficult. Once diagnosed, you need prompt surgical or medical treatment.

Molar pregnancy: This is a pregnancy where the placental tissue grows abnormally and never results in a normal pregnancy. You need prompt treatment and follow-up because a molar pregnancy can become life-threatening.



Emotions of loss

You may experience many deep emotions from an early

pregnancy loss. These can include shock, denial, anger, guilt, depression, sadness, fear, anxiety and numbness. In some situations, a person may feel conflicted because they did not want to be pregnant. These reactions differ in intensity and duration from person to person.

If the pregnancy has not progressed normally or has been uncertain since the beginning, some may feel relief that it is finally over. However, repeated pregnancy losses or a loss after infertility can be extremely devastating.

You can go back and forth feeling several of the emotions listed above, and they may even be in conflict from time to time. This can sometimes feel quite distressing.

People grieve differently

Some women feel overwhelming grief, while others feel that it’s an experience that they just have to live through.

You and your partner may grieve differently. Your partner may be upset because of the loss of the pregnancy and the physical and emotional impact it has had on you.

They may withdraw, or avoid talking about the loss to avoid upsetting you. Encourage discussion and acknowledge the fact that you may both be grieving differently.

Family and friends may find it difficult to talk to you about your loss. They may find your loss and sadness difficult to cope with, so they may avoid talking about it. Some may try to cheer you up in the hopes that you will deal with the pregnancy loss more quickly. Unfortunately, some people will not understand the significance of your loss.

Acknowledge your grief

Emotions may come and go in waves. For example, when you least expect it, you may feel very weepy on special occasions such as holidays and birthdays, or upon hearing a certain song. These triggers can happen any time. Hearing about a birth of other family and friends, seeing other pregnant women or women with newborn babies may also trigger many emotions.

During these moments, you may want to seek out others who will listen and offer support or you may prefer to be alone for a while. The feelings that you experience are not right or wrong. They are all common feelings.