

## **BLIGHTED OVUM or ANEMBRYONIC PREGNANCY**

### ***What do these terms mean?***

Both “blighted ovum” and “anembryonic pregnancy” refer to a pregnancy in which the pregnancy sac develops in the womb, but the sac is empty and does not contain a developing baby (also called embryo). The most likely explanation is that the embryo stopped developing at a very early stage and was re-absorbed.

“Blighted ovum” literally means an egg cell which has something wrong with it, but this doesn’t really explain what is seen. “Anembryonic pregnancy” means a pregnancy without an embryo. This is a better description of what is seen on the scan and more doctors now use it, although you may hear both terms.

The condition is usually discovered between the 8th and 13th week of pregnancy, sometimes at a routine early scan and can come as a shock, especially if you had no signs that anything was wrong.

### ***Why does it happen? Was it something I did?***

It is thought to be due to an error in the early development of the baby, commonly due to a chromosomal abnormality in that particular pregnancy. This is very unlikely to be caused by anything which you or your partner did or didn’t do, and is not anyone’s fault.

### ***Will it happen again?***

It might, but it’s unlikely. A blighted ovum is a chance event and most women go on to have a successful pregnancy.

### ***I was told there was no baby there. But I felt pregnant and the pregnancy test was positive***

The hormones which give the symptoms of pregnancy are produced not by the baby, but by the placental (or afterbirth) tissues. These often continue to be active even after the baby has died and been re-absorbed, so pregnancy tests can still be positive and the mother may still feel pregnant.

### ***I feel as if I’ve no right to grieve, if there was no baby there***

You do have a right to grieve. You are grieving for what would have been. You *were* pregnant, and you may react like many women or couples who lose a baby at any time during pregnancy. Sadness, a sense of loss, depression, anger and feelings of guilt are all common and distressing reactions. These emotions may also come to the surface at the time when your baby would have been born.

If you need support and comfort at any time, The Miscarriage Association is here to help and can put you in touch with someone else who has experienced this kind of miscarriage. Your GP, midwife or health visitor may also be able to help and advise.