



MISCARRIAGE
ASSOCIATION

The knowledge to help

Pregnancy after loss



Pregnancy after a previous loss or losses can be really tough. Many people experience challenging mixed emotions including guilt, fear, anxiety, worry, hope and relief.

Living with uncertainty takes strength and courage, especially when you have had experience of things going wrong in the past.

No statistics, information or scans can remove the uncertainty and anxiety completely. But there are things you can do to increase your strength and ability to cope.

We hope this information and support will help you make your own plan to get through the weeks ahead.

We've written this leaflet with the person who is physically pregnant in mind. But we know partners can struggle too and we hope a lot of this information will be relevant to them as well.

Not everyone will have a partner, but if you do, our section on 'You and your partner' has more ideas to help you navigate this time together.

“ We saw the two lines... then almost immediately the anxiety crept in. Anxiety like I had never known before. It was then I realised that anyone affected by miscarriage has the rosy view of pregnancy stolen forever. Gone is that innocent belief that two lines equals a baby. ”

These are some of the things people told us they found hard about pregnancy after a previous loss or losses.

- Strong feelings of anxiety that start as soon as you have a positive test but a long time before you can get any support from healthcare services.
- Moments of overwhelming anxiety or panic.
- Struggling with physical symptoms like sickness, exhaustion and painful breasts – finding them hard to cope with but fearing the worst if they ease.
- Feeling unable to trust your body.
- Finding it difficult not to start checking due dates and imagining the future while still keeping your expectations very low.
- Living on high alert, for example checking for blood whenever you go to the toilet and fearing any feeling of wetness in your underwear.
- Dealing with grief for your previous loss or losses alongside fear and hope for this pregnancy.
- Feeling guilty or worried about forgetting your lost baby or babies.
- Having a different experience to other pregnant people and feeling isolated as a result.
- Having a strained relationship with family and friends because you find it difficult to cope with positive or excited reactions.
- Not wanting to tell people in case things go wrong but finding it difficult to manage without their support, whether at work or with family and friends.
- Feeling sad you feel this way or as if the joy of pregnancy has been taken away from you.
- Feeling isolated and unsupported if specialist care you had before pregnancy (for example, during fertility treatment) does not continue now you are pregnant.

Emotional support and self help

In this section we include some ideas and suggestions to help you look after your mental and emotional health as you go through your pregnancy.

There is very little you can do to affect the outcome of the pregnancy but there are lots of things you can do to help manage your health and the anxiety you feel. Try to focus on the things you can control.

One day at a time

People we spoke to said that they usually found it easier to focus on the day or week of pregnancy they were at right now.

In the [pregnancy after miscarriage](#)¹ section of our website you will find suggestions and ideas that may help at different stages of pregnancy.

You may want to read them all at once or drop in and out, depending on what you need right now.

You can use our [pregnant after loss](#) Facebook groups to find people who are at a similar stage to you.

“To be pregnant after loss is a very vulnerable place to be.”

Finding ongoing support

You may have already had your booking in appointment with a midwife you can talk to. If not, you could ask your practice nurse or GP what help they can offer. You might want to ask to be referred to counselling if possible.

Counselling can give you the tools and techniques to manage ongoing uncertainty and help you cope with your feelings about your previous loss or losses and your current pregnancy. Our webpage on [counselling after a miscarriage](#) has more information.

If you are not happy with the care you are given, it's usually ok to request a different doctor or a second opinion. This isn't always an easy process, especially if you are feeling vulnerable. Friends or family may be able to advocate for you and support you during this time.

“After the second one, I thought, ‘I’m not coping very well, I’m going to have to get some help with this’. So I went to counselling, which I continued throughout the first trimester of my third pregnancy.”

¹ Please note that we often use the term 'pregnancy loss' to include miscarriage, ectopic and molar pregnancy. But sometimes, using the word 'miscarriage' for all three makes it easier for people to find the information they're looking for online when using a search engine.

Finding a community

Having a different experience of pregnancy to those around you can be isolating, especially if friends and family don't really understand.

Talking to others going through something similar, or listening to them and their stories can help you feel part of a wider community. This can be very comforting.

Here are some ideas to help you connect with others. See our Useful Resources on page 14 for direct links.

- **Listen to others.**
There are a number of podcasts that explore pregnancy after loss. Our online information also has a number of recorded conversations with women who have been there.
- **Connect online.**
Many people find [online support](#) on our Facebook groups or forum helpful. You can choose to join an early or later pregnancy group and search posts to find others who are at a similar stage to you.
- **Connect in an app.**
Some pregnancy apps recognise the experience of those who are pregnant after loss. They may have communities of users who you can talk pregnancy after loss can help you feel less alone.
- **Talk to us.**
[Call us](#), or talk via [live chat](#). We also have a support group on Zoom.

“I’m now almost 37 weeks, the group... provided a lot of support and a safe place to share my worries in those difficult early days.”

- **Read other people’s stories.**
Sometimes just reading about others experiences can help you feel less alone. Find stories about pregnancy after loss on our website or in our forum.
- **Create your own small community.**
Make a small messaging group of people you trust to support you. These may be friends or people you meet online who understand how you feel.

“I had a few people that I could talk to every day. And even if they hadn’t experienced it, there was no judgment on [my saying] I’ve just taken my fifth pregnancy test of the day, and it’s only 10am. That was absolutely fine. And that really helped.”

Looking after yourself

Lots of people who have experienced pregnancy loss feel let down by their body.

Even starting along the path of pregnancy after a loss or losses takes courage and strength. This is a physically and emotionally demanding time for you.

You are doing an incredibly difficult thing. It is not selfish to take time for yourself. Your body and mind deserve care.

Different things work for different people so you might need to try a few things out.

- Some women find that journalling and writing and reading positive coping statements help them manage uncertainty and anxiety in early pregnancy. We have more information on our website.
- Many women find pregnancy yoga helpful. Other relaxation techniques like hypnotherapy and meditation can also help you feel calmer.
- Some women find practising mindfulness a helpful way to deal with anxiety and other difficult emotions.
- Take time to do things you enjoy, whether that is walks or other gentle exercise, gardening, cooking or just downtime with a film.

- Our information on **looking after your mental health** has some suggestions to help you improve your wellbeing.
- Perhaps ask your partner or family for more help with housework and childcare (if you have a living child already). Talk to your manager about reducing your hours or workload if you feel you need to.
- If you are finding it hard to manage on your own, struggling to manage everyday tasks and feeling hopeless, you may need additional support.

“Whenever I started to think irrationally or feel panicked I would listen to a hypnotherapy CD. Imagining I was somewhere safe and focusing on my breathing would slow down my heart rate and make me feel calmer.”

Remembering the baby or babies you lost

You may be mourning the baby or babies you lost while hoping for the baby you are pregnant with now.

Some people find it helpful to make sense of these complex emotions by finding a way to stay connected to the baby or babies they have lost. You might like to write or talk to them or spend some time in a place where you like to remember them.

“ I felt guilty, as if by wanting and loving this baby, I was ‘moving on’ from the one who came before. ”

The Miscarriage Association has lots of ways to help you remember your baby or babies and mark the loss of their brief life -

www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk/your-feelings/marking-your-loss/

We know not everyone will feel this way or want to mark their loss. There is no right way to deal with loss and it is important you do what is right for you.

Surrogacy after loss

If you are using a surrogate for your pregnancy you might find yourself feeling even less in control of the outcome.

You may find you need to talk to her more regularly or ask her to have more scans for your own reassurance.

If this is the first time this surrogate has been pregnant for you, you may feel optimistic things might go differently this time.

If you are pregnant for someone who has experienced a previous loss or you have experienced a loss yourself you may feel the same kind of anxieties. We hope the information in this leaflet will be useful for you too.

You may find it helpful to chat to people who understand. *Cots Surrogacy UK* has an online Facebook group where you can talk to others. You may also find it helpful to search our [pregnant after loss](#) Facebook groups and forums.

Medical support and scans

In some cases, you should be able to access additional medical support and scans.

You may choose to access extra scans privately. Our online hub has more detailed support to help you cope before and after scans.

Spotting or bleeding

If you are spotting or bleeding in early pregnancy, and have had one or more previous miscarriages, NICE Guideline NG126 says you should be offered progesterone.

You may still have to wait until you are six weeks pregnant and have had a scan to confirm the pregnancy is in your uterus.

Ectopic pregnancy

Most women who have had an ectopic pregnancy do go on to have a healthy pregnancy. However, you do have a higher risk of another ectopic than someone who hasn't had one.

You should have an early scan at around six or seven weeks to check if the pregnancy is in the right place. If the scan shows a developing pregnancy in the uterus then you are unlikely to need any further tests or special care.

Even so, you may still be anxious about something going wrong again.

Recurrent miscarriage

If you have experienced several miscarriages in a row, you may already have had some investigations.

If you had a diagnosis and are receiving new treatment in this pregnancy, you might feel more positive about the outcome.

If you are taking part in a clinical trial of a new treatment you are likely to have extra care and attention in this pregnancy. This can be very supportive even if you don't know whether you are having the trial treatment or the placebo.

“ I was prescribed medication which I would take every morning. That morning ritual helped me to manage my anxiety - that I was doing something different this time. ”

If you had a problem identified for which there is no treatment, or if tests didn't show up any obvious cause, you probably still feel very anxious.

It might be helpful to know that when no cause for recurrent miscarriage has been found, the chances of having a successful pregnancy are good.

Molar pregnancy

While it is possible to have a second molar pregnancy, you are much more likely to have a healthy pregnancy this time round.

Specialist molar pregnancy centres usually advise having a scan at around eight weeks if you are pregnant after a single molar.

Unless you have had treatment or more than one molar pregnancy, you are unlikely to need any other follow up. You can always contact your treatment centre for advice.

Extra check ups or scans on the NHS

If all is well, a scan can offer you reassurance, although most people say this is only short lived. Some people feel that the stress of a scan isn't worth the level of reassurance they receive and they would rather wait, or be scanned as little as possible.

Some doctors or Early Pregnancy Units may be willing to refer you for extra scans or support on the NHS. However, this can depend on the policies of individual hospitals or the understanding of the medical staff you see.

Private scans

It can feel very difficult if you have experienced a loss or losses but you are not offered any additional care early in pregnancy. Some people choose to have one or more private scans.

If you had a missed miscarriage that was diagnosed at your dating (12 week) scan last time, you may want to have a scan to find out sooner if there is any sign that anything is wrong. If the person scanning you is concerned, they will usually advise you to contact your doctor or hospital.

If you do choose to have earlier private scans, it's important to choose a provider who is regulated by the Care Quality Commission.

“I had a scan pretty much every two weeks until my booking scan, which was a blessing and a curse. I don't think I would've got through my first trimester without it. But I found scans extremely triggering by that stage. I got so worked up that it was just a really unpleasant experience, apart from, obviously, the sheer relief and joy when things were okay.”

You and your partner (if you have one)

Your experience of pregnancy loss might have brought you and your partner closer together or it might have put your relationship under strain.

You may feel differently about this pregnancy. Perhaps one of you is more worried about trying again, or one of you is feeling more optimistic this time. You may feel you need to hide your real feelings to protect your partner. This can be stressful too.

“ My husband and I were in no way prepared for my emotional outbursts. On two occasions I thought it would end our marriage. ”

If you can find a way to talk to each other about how you are feeling, it may help you support each other.

The book *‘How to Help Someone after a Miscarriage’* has a chapter called ‘If you’re the partner’ which has some useful suggestions to help you communicate. See our Useful Resources on page 15 for more information.

Perhaps you are going through this pregnancy alone, out of choice or because your relationship has ended. You may want to lean on close family or friends for support.

If you don’t have anyone who understands, you may be able to find people who know how you feel in our online groups or by calling our helpline. See our ‘Finding a community’ section on page 5 and our Useful Resources on page 14 for more information and links.

“ There was a poster that said, ‘One in four pregnancies end in a loss’. He was genuinely shocked. He said, ‘That makes you feel a bit better, doesn’t it?’ and I understand where he was coming from in that. But in that moment, that did not make me feel better. ”

Supporting someone who is pregnant after loss

This section is for you if you are supporting someone who is pregnant after a previous loss.

If you haven't experienced a loss yourself, it might be difficult to understand the way they are feeling. Many people say they can no longer trust their body. They live in fear of something going wrong and are terrified at the thought of having to go through another miscarriage.

“ I think it is much harder to imagine what losing a baby in pregnancy feels like if you have not experienced it yourself. That can make it feel more difficult to support people. ”

Pregnancy after loss takes courage and strength. The strain of waiting and enduring ongoing uncertainty about something so important and life changing can be exhausting. Many people do find their way through, but often in private and without support.

“ It's definitely changed me. I think being under so much anxiety for so long and losing faith in your body as well, it made even things like my delivery quite tricky. There's loads of pressure on you to enjoy every moment of it when it's actually really tough. ”

Here are some ideas to help you offer the right kind of support. You might also find it helpful to look at our leaflet *‘Supporting someone you know’*.

- **Support them to seek the help they need.**

This might be attending appointments, support groups or scans with them, helping them to find the right counsellor or going to the Early Pregnancy Unit for an emergency check up.

Remember that some of their needs may not feel rational to you, but may provide some much needed release from stress for them.

- **Don’t try to solve things.**

Sometimes people don’t need people to try and fix their pain. They need someone to acknowledge what they are feeling and support them while they feel it.

- **Check in with them regularly.**

This is especially important around times that might be difficult for them. These might be in the run up to scans, around the dates of previous losses and at the time in this pregnancy where they lost their baby previously.

- **Try to understand.**

Read this leaflet and our online information to understand more about how they might be feeling. Reading and listening to others’ stories can help too.

- **Don’t assume or act as if this pregnancy makes ‘everything ok’.**

It may do but most people will still grieve the babies they have lost and feel guilty they are replacing them.

- **Stay in touch whatever happens.**

If they lose this pregnancy too they will need a lot of support. If the pregnancy is successful and they have their baby, they may still struggle but feel less able to ask for help.

“ By the time I did have my daughter, some of these people had almost been on the journey with me. You know, they’d been there for almost all of it. And it was a really awesome feeling, actually, by the end of it. ”

Pregnancy after loss can be a difficult and anxious time whether you are pregnant yourself or supporting someone else.

We hope that by looking after yourself, accepting and finding ways to manage difficult emotions and talking to people you trust you will find your way through.

The Miscarriage Association is always here if you need someone to talk to.

“ Even thinking about how difficult it is makes me feel sad. But it gets better with time. And even if the worst happens, you’ve been there before, you will survive it. But if it doesn’t happen, it does get easier.

Keep talking to people you trust. If it helps, do access counselling. Accept that you’re going to feel really anxious. That will come and go. Some days will be better than others.

Sometimes you just need to ride it out and know that tomorrow might or should be better.

When you’re four weeks pregnant, twelve weeks is an eternity. The first trimester drags. Break it down into chunks, six weeks, whatever gestation it happened last time, your twelve-week scan. And every time you hit a milestone, your anxiety will get a little bit less. ”

Useful resources

Websites

The Miscarriage Association has a staffed helpline, a volunteer support network, an online support forum, a range of helpful leaflets and a useful and informative website.

Our Pregnancy After Miscarriage hub has more information and support about pregnancy after loss.

Tel: 01924 200799

www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk

Relate can help with relationship problems.

Tel: 0300 100 1234

www.relate.org.uk

Mind, the mental health charity.

Tel: 0300 123 3393

www.mind.org.uk

The Ectopic Pregnancy Trust

Tel: 020 7733 2653

www.ectopic.org.uk

Fertility Network UK

Tel: 01424 732361

www.fertilitynetworkuk.org

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy has information

about counselling and a list of registered counsellors.

www.bacp.co.uk

The Care Quality Commission, the independent regulator of health and social care in England

www.cqc.org.uk

Choice and Medication has patient information about mental health medication and treatment. Can help people make informed decisions about medication during pregnancy.

www.choiceandmedication.org

£1 for one month access

BUMPS

Best Use of Medication in Pregnancy provides information about medicine in pregnancy. Can help people make informed decisions about medication during pregnancy.

www.medicinesinpregnancy.org

COTS provides support to surrogates and intended parents.

www.surrogacy.org.uk

Podcasts

The Worst Girl Gang Ever
(TWGGE) – Bex Gunn and Laura Buckingham

Pregnancy after Loss podcast – Shannon Henry

Finally Pregnant – Cat Strawbridge

Books

How to Help Someone after a Miscarriage
(Contains a chapter on supporting someone who is pregnant after loss)
Clare Foster
Wellbeck Publishing 2021
ISBN 978-1-78956-290-3

Love Letters to Moms Pregnant After Loss
Emily Long and Lindsay Henke Firefly
Grace Publishing 2020
ISBN: 978-0-9965556-9-2

Pregnancy After Loss
Zoe Clark-Coates Orion Spring 2020
ISBN: 978-1-4091-9594-8

Apps

Pregnancy After Loss Support – Pregnancy App
www.pregnancyafterlosssupport.org/pregnancy-after-loss-app
Available on Apple and Google Play

Courses

Pregnancy After Loss course – TWGGE.
A self-paced course where participants pay £99 for access to a range of resources to help them look after themselves throughout their pregnancy.

Useful leaflets published by the Miscarriage Association

Recurrent miscarriage
Ectopic pregnancy
Molar pregnancy
Looking after your mental health during and after pregnancy loss
Partners too
Supporting someone you know

All our leaflets are available at
www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk/information/leaflets/

Need to talk to someone who understands?

Call our support line on 01924 200799. Monday to Friday, 9am-4pm.
Chat with us online at www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk.
Or email info@miscarriageassociation.org.uk



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