



MISCARRIAGE
ASSOCIATION

The knowledge to help

Thinking about another pregnancy



Experiencing pregnancy loss¹ or losses can change the way you think and feel about another pregnancy.

If you're reading this leaflet, it's likely you² and/or your partner want to have a child, or another one. But after a loss or losses, there may be lots of other considerations to take into account when thinking about pregnancy.

You may want to start trying immediately but wonder if you should wait.

You may be thinking seriously about stopping trying but feel unsure about the finality of this decision.

Or you may fall somewhere in the middle. You and/or your partner may really want a baby but worried about whether you will be able to cope with trying to conceive, being pregnant and the risk of another loss.

We've divided this leaflet into three sections. The first section explores how you might feel about another pregnancy and what might influence your thoughts and decisions.

The second section has some general support and suggestions to help you make sense of these feelings and pressures, whatever your situation.

The third section offers support in preparing for another pregnancy – if that's what you decide to do.

We hope this helps you feel more prepared, confident and hopeful about your next steps, whatever they are.

“Part of me desperately wants to be pregnant and part of me is just too terrified of going through the same thing again.”

¹ By 'pregnancy loss' we mean miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy and molar pregnancy.

² By 'you', we mean either the person who has had the physical loss or losses or their partner. We recognise that some couples may each have been pregnant and had a loss; and also that some reading this may not have a partner. We hope you will find the leaflet helpful whatever your situation.

Thoughts, hopes and worries about another pregnancy

I want a baby but it's no longer that simple.

- You may fear the emotional and/or physical impact of another loss.
- You may be worried about your risk of another loss due to things you can't change, like your age, pregnancy history or ethnicity³.
- If you don't know what caused your previous loss or losses, you may be worried you can't make any changes to stop it happening again.
- You may be concerned that you or your partner will be very anxious throughout another pregnancy and this will be hard to manage or will increase the risk of another loss (it won't).
- You may be worried that pregnancy will be a regular reminder of difficult emotions and experiences related to your previous loss.
- You may be worried about how another pregnancy and related anxiety will affect your relationship with people you are close to.
- You may have had severe pregnancy sickness (hyperemesis gravidarum) last time and don't know whether you can put yourself through that again as well as anxiety about another loss.
- You may not be sure if you are strong enough to cope with the strain and uncertainty of trying to conceive after a loss.
- You may not be sure if you can go through the strain and cost of fertility treatment or assisted conception again. Getting pregnant may have been difficult and/or expensive. You might feel overwhelmed or scared about going through it all again.
- You may not be sure if your surrogate will go through it for you again, feel uncomfortable asking them or not be sure whether you will be able to find another one.
- If you and your partner are both able to carry a baby and must make decisions about who will be pregnant this time, you may have to navigate complicated feelings related to this decision.
- You may want to wait until after your previous due date or another important date.
- You may be struggling with sex and/or intimacy after your previous loss.
- You and your partner may have different concerns. This may mean you are finding it difficult to agree on when the best time would be to get pregnant again.
- You may feel as if another pregnancy means you are somehow forgetting or replacing your lost baby.

“Waiting until we could afford fertility treatment again made us so upset. Now, I think this gave us both much needed time to heal and to cope better when we did finally get pregnant.”

³ We talk more about risk on page 12.

I'm feeling pressure to start thinking about another pregnancy.

You may also be feeling pressure to start trying again from external sources or because of your situation.

This can be particularly hard if you don't feel ready.

- You may feel you are 'running out of time' if you are already older, or are worried you will have more losses before a successful pregnancy.
- If you took a long time to conceive last time, whether naturally or through treatment, you may feel you should give yourself as much time as possible to conceive again.
- You might feel that you want to be pregnant before the anniversary of your loss or due date.
- You might be under pressure to get pregnant again from your partner or your family.

There is no right answer to how long you should wait or when is the best time to try again – it can be different for different people in different situations.

I want to be pregnant again as soon as possible.

There are lots of different reasons why you might want to be pregnant again quickly. These may outweigh some of the concerns above or sit alongside them.

- You may simply want a baby, or another one.
- Even if your initial pregnancy was unplanned, your experience and loss may have made you realise that you want to be pregnant again soon.
- You may feel empty, physically or emotionally, and hope another pregnancy will help with this.
- You may know your partner really wants you to be pregnant.
- You really want to give your own parent/s a grandchild, or another one.
- You may think it will be easier to be around pregnant friends, family or colleagues if you are pregnant too.
- You might feel confident it will go differently this time, perhaps because you have had investigations and been offered treatment.
- You may feel you need to 'prove' you can do it.
- You may just be ready to move on.

I really want to get pregnant again but have to wait.

Even if you really want to get pregnant again straight away, your previous loss may mean you have to wait. This is not always in your control.

You or your partner may be:

- still bleeding or experiencing other symptoms of miscarriage
- being advised to wait after surgery, delivery or certain medication
- in follow up after a molar pregnancy

- having investigations after miscarriage and waiting for results and potential treatment
- waiting for the results of a post-mortem or partial post-mortem on your baby
- on the waiting list for fertility treatment
- looking for a surrogate.

It's frustrating to have the decision taken out of your hands. Wanting to be pregnant but having to wait is hard – and harder still if people around you seem to be getting pregnant easily or want you to be pregnant.

“When I found out I had to wait at least six months (after my molar pregnancy), I cried for about a week. Life seemed so unfair and to have no control over when I could try for a baby was awful.”

I just don't think I can do it again.

You may be starting to think about stopping trying completely.

You may have come to the end of the line medically, or simply feel that you can't take any more, physically, emotionally or even financially.

It can be scary to let yourself think about not trying again. For some people there comes a clear moment where they make this decision. For others it's a process. You may make and unmake the decision many times.

You may want to put off deciding either way for a while and just sit with your feelings, noticing if and how they shift and change. You may decide not to actively 'try' but also not to take steps to prevent a pregnancy either.

If you and your partner have different feelings about what comes next, you may need to keep talking openly to find a path that feels right for you both. Relationship counselling might help. We hope the information in the next section will be useful too.

If you do decide to stop trying, it might bring a different sense of loss. You may have spent many months, if not years, trying to get pregnant and stay pregnant. When you stop trying, it creates a new space, one that used to be filled with hopes and plans for a future with children, or with more children than you have now.

You may find it helpful to look at our leaflet *When the trying stops*⁴.

“Hope has gone and that leaves a simple fact: it is not going to work. There is something straightforward and clean in that. I have had enough of this. I realise hope is what has made this so painful but now it is gone, somehow it is easier.”

⁴ All our leaflets are available free at www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk/leaflets.

What might help

Wherever you are in the process of thinking about another pregnancy, we hope you find the following thoughts helpful.

Communication

Communicating with your partner (if you have one) about difficult feelings and needs can help things feel easier. This may be especially important if you have different opinions about another pregnancy.

If you and your partner are finding it hard to talk openly, or are struggling with intimacy after your loss, you might find relationship or sex counselling helpful (see page 14).

The book *How to Help Someone After a Miscarriage* has a helpful section starting on page 68 with suggestions to make talking together easier and more constructive. You may find these tips helpful to communicating with both your partner and your wider family.

Writing things down might help. You might share this with your partner or others close to you, or just use it to help you think things through. You might find it helpful to read some of the personal experiences on our website⁵; you may find stories there that describe similar feelings and experiences to your own.

Looking after your mental health

Pregnancy loss, trying to conceive, pregnancy after loss and coming to terms with stopping trying can all take a huge toll on your mental health.

Looking after your mental health now can help ensure you have the coping techniques and support available if you do find yourself struggling further down the line.

Our leaflet *Looking after your mental health during and after pregnancy loss* may help. You might also find it helpful to look at our information on *counselling after a miscarriage*.

“ I had therapy after our loss when we were trying to conceive and when we finally got pregnant again. It helped me talk things through and manage the anxiety I felt. ”

Talking to others in the same situation

It's often helpful to talk to people in similar situations. It can help you feel less alone and give you new perspectives. You could try our forum, our Facebook groups or one of our face-to-face or Zoom support groups.

Podcasts, personal stories and short films or vlogs about pregnancy loss might also help you feel less isolated, and part of a wider community.

⁵ See www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk/information/your-stories/

Preparing for a new pregnancy

If you are reading this section, you may be clear in your mind that you want to be pregnant again. Or you might want more information before you decide.

Either way, you are likely to have questions and worries. We hope this section answers some of them for you.

What is the medical advice about when is best to try again?

You may find you have received, or read, different information about when it is best to get pregnant again.

These are the key facts and important pieces of information that can sometimes be misunderstood.

- Doctors usually advise not to have sex after miscarriage until all the bleeding has stopped. This is to avoid infection.
- You may have been advised to wait until after at least one period before trying for another baby.
- Bear in mind that the first menstrual cycle after a miscarriage can be much longer or shorter than usual, which can make it difficult to date a new pregnancy. This may not be a problem for you, but some people find uncertainty around dates and size hard to deal with after a previous loss.
- If you do conceive in that first cycle, that doesn't make you more likely to miscarry than if you had waited. There is even some evidence that conceiving in the first six months after a miscarriage lowers your risk of loss next time. Having said that, the researchers also emphasised that it's important not to rush into trying again, but to wait until you feel physically and emotionally ready⁶.

“I recently miscarried at 11 weeks. I would dearly love to conceive again but I am getting conflicting information on how long we should wait.”

⁶ See <http://bit.ly/ws/PqAv>.

I'm terrified of having another loss. Is there a way of knowing if it will happen again?

Going into a new pregnancy, you are likely to be very aware of the possibility of another loss. You may want to think about what practical and emotional support you will need in place if it does happen again.

This may help you feel more confident in your strength to survive if the worst happens, and thus more able to take this chance.

Sadly, we can't ever say for certain one way or the other. You can't ever completely rule out the chance of another loss.

The charity Tommy's has created a Miscarriage Support tool which **estimates** the chance of your next pregnancy being successful based on information you put in. (See our useful resources on page 14).

You may find it helpful to look at these statistics, or you may feel they don't offer any real reassurance. If you do choose to use a tool like this, it's worth staying mindful of how it makes you feel – if it relieves your worries (and for how long) or if it adds to them.

“It was quite a comfort when the midwife said that lots of women who have two miscarriages go on to have a good next pregnancy, but that doesn't change the fact that it might not be me! Statistics are all very well, but the chances for you are either 100% or 0%.”

What can I/we do to help us feel more confident in a new pregnancy?

You are likely to want to do what you can to reduce risk and increase the chance of a successful pregnancy. This can make a difference to how you cope.

- Follow all the NHS *conception* and *pregnancy* advice as best you can. This is likely to include advice about weight, smoking, alcohol and caffeine as well as foods to eat and avoid. Talk to your doctor or midwife if you have any concerns.
- Discuss *medication* with your doctor to help you decide whether taking it, or not, is best for you and your baby. In most cases, deciding whether to take a medication is a process of balancing up the risks and benefits with the support of a health professional. Never take anything that has not been prescribed.
- If you have had investigations and been offered treatment to reduce your risk of miscarriage, discuss this with your GP or consultant before trying to conceive.

“I would love to have another baby. The thought of having another miscarriage fills me with dread but I know that we will try again and won't give up. Because although there is a chance that I will miscarry, there is also a chance that everything will be ok this time.”

Understanding risk vs. cause

It's helpful to understand the difference between a risk factor and a cause. A risk is something that is **associated with** an outcome. A cause is something that is **responsible for** producing an outcome.

There are several things that **increase the risk** of miscarriage but, even if you did any of those things in your last pregnancy, that doesn't mean that any one of them actually caused your loss.

For example, someone might have smoked heavily in the first months of pregnancy (a risk factor for miscarriage) but their loss may have been caused by something totally different, like a blood clotting problem.

Our leaflets *Why me?*, *Recurrent miscarriage*, and *Ectopic pregnancy* have more information about risk factors and possible causes.

How can I manage my stress and anxiety throughout a new pregnancy?

Realistically, there is not a great deal you can do to affect the outcome of the pregnancy. But there are things you can do to help manage your health and the anxiety you feel.

Try to focus on the things you can control. Our leaflet *Pregnancy after loss* may help and so too might some of the suggestions you can find in our leaflet *Looking after your mental health during and after pregnancy loss*.

We also have two Pregnancy after Loss support groups on Facebook and a monthly Zoom support group meeting.

Will doing things differently help?

There is no guarantee that doing things differently will lead to a different outcome, but it may help you feel more confident in your chances. This may help you deal with the uncertainty.

Some things can be easy to change, for example following health advice more rigorously. Support and encouragement from those around you may help with this. You might find, though, that family and friends have different ideas about what you should or shouldn't be doing next time round.

They may have opinions about the food you eat or the work or exercise you do. This can be unsettling and undermining and may cause conflict. Although they may all mean well, you may need to find an ally – someone who will support you in doing what feels right for you.

If a surrogate was pregnant for you when you experienced your loss, you may have mixed feelings about whether you would like them to carry for you again. You may feel a need to do things differently by trying to find a different surrogate. They may really want to try again for you, or they may find the idea difficult. It may be hard to find and build a relationship with a new surrogate.

It's important to try and balance your feelings around making changes with the reality that these changes may make little difference to the outcome.

If you and your partner are both able to get pregnant, you may face the decision of who should carry the pregnancy this time. Some people who experience loss really need to get pregnant again, others may prefer their partner to take a turn.

These decisions can sometimes come with complex emotions around guilt and blame. If you are finding it difficult to find a way through, you may find relationship therapy can support you to have these conversations.

Final thoughts

When you have experienced a loss or losses, thinking about another pregnancy is likely to bring with it a complex mix of feelings, pressures, hopes and fears.

You don't have to make any definite decisions right now. You could choose to start along one path, explore your options and assess as you go. Feel free to let things sit for a while. Talk things through with those close to you. Arm yourself with information, if that is what you like to do, or not if you don't.

We hope this leaflet has given you space to think about what decision might be the best one for you and confidence to prepare, as far as is possible, for where that path might take you.

Useful resources

The Miscarriage Association

offers support and information through a staffed helpline: phone, live chat, email and via direct messaging:

- after miscarriage, ectopic or molar pregnancy,
- when you are thinking about trying again,
- during pregnancy after a loss.

Our support volunteers run face to face and online support groups and offer phone support. We have an online forum, private Facebook groups and a range of leaflets. And our website has lots of information as well as and stories from others who have experienced pregnancy loss.

www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk

Miscarriage Association leaflets

Why me?

Recurrent miscarriage

Ectopic pregnancy

Looking after your mental health during and after loss

Pregnancy loss and infertility

Pregnancy after loss

When the trying stops

These and all our leaflets are free to download at www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk/leaflets

Brilliant Beginnings

A non-profit surrogacy agency based in the UK that also provides some guidance and support, including support for surrogacy teams after a miscarriage or stillbirth.

brilliantbeginnings.co.uk/information-for-intended-parents/

Bumps (Best use of medicines in pregnancy)

Provides reliable, evidence based, and accurate information about use of medicines in pregnancy, in the form of freely available patient information leaflets.

medicinesinpregnancy.org

Ectopic Pregnancy Trust

Information and support for anyone affected by ectopic pregnancy.

ectopic.org.uk/

Fertility Network UK

Support for people trying to conceive, going through fertility treatment, or living without children.

fertilitynetworkuk.org

How to Help Someone After a Miscarriage: A Practical Guide to Supporting Someone after a Miscarriage, Molar or Ectopic Pregnancy.

Clare Foster

ISBN-13 : 978-1789562903

NHS pregnancy guides

Evidence based information on trying for a baby, pregnancy, labour and birth

nhs.uk/pregnancy/

Relate

Relationship counselling and support, online and face to face

relate.org.uk

Miscarriage Support Tool – Tommy's

miscarriagetool.tommys.org

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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The knowledge to help

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