

Emergency Services

Threatened Miscarriage

When you have vaginal bleeding and/or cramping early in your pregnancy (before 20 weeks), there is a chance you could miscarry or lose the baby. This is called a 'threatened miscarriage'. It is also possible to have bleeding early in your pregnancy without miscarrying.

To get a better idea of what is happening with your pregnancy, you will need an ultrasound test.

After your ultrasound, you might be asked to return to the Emergency Department to review the results. If you are not asked to return to the Emergency Department, arrange to see your family doctor for the results.

Go to the nearest Emergency Department if:

- The amount of bleeding increases to where you need to use 2 or more sanitary pads each hour over a 3 hour period.
- You notice large blood clots or greyish-white tissue. Save these in a clean container or plastic bag and bring it to the doctor.
- You develop a fever greater than 38.5°C (101.3° F).
- You have pain that is more severe than menstrual cramps.
- Your pain moves to being on only one side of your abdomen (belly).
- You feel lightheaded or dizzy.

How to take care of yourself at home

The actions listed here are meant to protect you and your unborn baby. However, you need to know there is nothing you can do to prevent a miscarriage. It could happen anyway.

- Rest as much as possible for 24 to 48 hours. We might ask you to rest with your legs raised up on pillows.
- Keep track of the number of sanitary pads you use in a day.
- Make an appointment to see your family doctor as soon as possible.
- **Do not** smoke or use illegal drugs.
- **Do not** drink alcohol.

While you have the cramping and/or bleeding:

- **Do not** do any heavy lifting, bending, pushing, pulling, or other activities that cause you to strain or bear-down.
- **Do not** use tampons.
- **Do not** douche or insert any creams or suppositories into your vagina.
- **Do not** take baths. Shower instead.
- **Do not** have sexual intercourse.

Threatened Miscarriage - *continued*

Coping with a miscarriage

If the results of your ultrasound indicate your bleeding is a miscarriage, it may help you to know that it is not because of something you did.

A miscarriage is not caused by stress, exercise, or sex. It is usually the body's way of ending a pregnancy when the unborn child is not growing normally.

No treatment can stop a miscarriage. The miscarriage does not happen all at once. It usually takes place over several days.

As long as you do not have heavy blood loss, a fever, weakness, or other signs of infection, the miscarriage will occur naturally. If you do have any of these symptoms, contact your family doctor right away.

Helping you through a miscarriage

- Use sanitary pads instead of tampons while you are bleeding. You can expect to have a small to medium amount of vaginal bleeding for 1 to 2 weeks. The bleeding can be similar to, or slightly heavier than, a normal period. The bleeding should get lighter after a week.
- Take acetaminophen (Tylenol) for abdominal cramps. You can have cramps for several days after the miscarriage.

- Eat a well-balanced diet that is high in iron and Vitamin C.

This table gives you some foods high in iron and Vitamin C.

Iron	Vitamin C
Red meat	Citrus fruits
Shellfish	Tomatoes (raw)
Eggs	Red bell peppers (raw)
Beans, dried peas	
Leafy green vegetables	Broccoli (raw)

- You may feel guilty, sad, worried, or helpless. This is normal. It can help to talk with your partner, family, and friends. Talk to your doctor as well, especially if you have any worries or concerns. You may find it helpful to talk with a counsellor or spiritual advisor. There are also support groups in many communities. Check your local community association or library.
- Wait until you have had at least one normal period before you try to get pregnant again.

Remember – If you have a miscarriage, it does not mean you cannot have a normal pregnancy in the future.

To learn more, it's good to ask:

- Your family doctor
- HealthLinkBC - call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf and hard of hearing) or go online to www.HealthLinkBC.ca