



SPONTANEOUS ABORTION (MISCARRIAGE)

A spontaneous abortion (miscarriage) is a pregnancy that ends involuntarily before the 20th week. Most occur during the first trimester (before 13 weeks).

Between 15 and 20 % of all pregnancies end with a spontaneous abortion. There is no way to stop a spontaneous abortion before 20 weeks. It is inevitable and irreversible.

SYMPTOMS

A spontaneous abortion presents as menstruation with more vaginal bleeding and stronger than usual abdominal cramps.

The evacuation of large clots of blood is altogether normal. If a small piece of tissue is expelled, try to save it for testing.

POSSIBLE CAUSES

Although many women feel guilty, it is very unlikely that they are responsible for a spontaneous abortion.

It is rare for a factor such as a fall, stress, prolonged work or standing for long hours to be the cause of a spontaneous abortion. Most of the time, it is an anomaly of the foetus that makes it non-viable.

A spontaneous abortion is nature's way of ending your pregnancy if the foetus is not developing normally.

Among other possible causes are infections, environmental (tobacco smoke, pollution) or biological factors (abnormal shape of the uterus, endocrinal or genetic problems, etc.).

AFTER A SPONTANEOUS ABORTION

- Wait 2 or 3 weeks before having sexual relations. We usually recommend that you wait until your next menstrual cycle has ended before trying to become pregnant. This is to give your uterus time to return to normal and to be able to more easily date the pregnancy.
- Your body needs time to recover from a miscarriage.
- The signs of pregnancy such as enlarged and sensitive breasts and a rounded abdomen may persist for several weeks.
- Vaginal bleeding may continue for about 7 to 10 days.
- The doctor may decide that a procedure called dilatation and curettage is necessary. This consists of removing the tissue that remains in the uterus to avoid the risk of infection or in case of excessive vaginal bleeding.

EMOTIONAL RESPONSES AND GRIEVING

Each person reacts differently to a spontaneous abortion, depending on her personality and personal history. A woman may struggle to come to terms with a miscarriage far more than even those closest to her may realize.

Sometimes your family and friends do not know what to say or how to react, and they might unintentionally say something hurtful even though they want to offer help and support.

When grieving the loss of a child, you will generally go through 5 stages:

- The loss is characterized by **denial**, because the couple cannot admit the reality of the end of the pregnancy.
- **Protest** is manifested by tears, anger and hostility.
- **Disorganization** corresponds to the period of sadness. The couple begins to acknowledge and accept that their loss is permanent.
- **Reorganization** marks the beginning of a social and emotional reinvestment. The couple does not forget the loss of their child, but they learn to live with it.
- The end of the work of grieving is characterized by **acceptance** of the loss, which will provide a certain degree of stability.

The help of a professional may be required to overcome these feelings and this difficult time.



Consult a doctor if:

- the bleeding increases and you need to change your sanitary napkin more than once an hour;
- you have the following signs or symptoms: sweats, generally feeling worse, weakness, pallor;
- bleeding lasts longer than 10 days or disagreeable-smelling vaginal discharge (signs of infection);
- there is an increase in abdominal pain (that is not alleviated by taking pain relievers such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen);
- your oral temperature is 38⁰ C or more, with or without chills.



Please call Info-Santé 8-1-1.



Go to the nearest hospital emergency department.

Authors

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References

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