

SPONTANEOUS ABORTION

(MISCARRIAGE OR EARLY PREGNANCY LOSS)



Spontaneous abortion (miscarriage) is an involuntary termination of pregnancy before the 20th week. Most spontaneous abortions occur during the first trimester (before 13 weeks). Between 15 to 20% of all pregnancies end in a spontaneous abortion. Nothing can stop a spontaneous abortion before 20 weeks. It is unavoidable and irreversible.

SYMPTOMS

Spontaneous abortion manifests as a menstruation with more abundant vaginal bleeding and abdominal cramps that are more intense than usual.

The evacuation of large blood clots is perfectly normal. If a small piece of tissue is expelled, try to keep it for analytical purposes.

POTENTIAL CAUSES

Although many women experience a feeling of guilt, there is no reason for them to believe that they are responsible for a spontaneous abortion.

In most cases, the cause is a fetal anomaly that makes the fetus non-viable. Spontaneous abortion is a natural way to end a pregnancy when the fetus is not developing normally.

THERAPEUTIC APPROACHES

Based on the discussion with your health professional, various options may be considered:

- **Expectant management** involves waiting for the embryonic tissue to spontaneously detach, without medication or surgery.
- **Pharmacological treatment** consists in administering medication to facilitate the expulsion of the embryonic tissue.

- **Surgical treatment** involves a dilation and curettage procedure performed under anesthesia to directly remove the embryonic tissue from the uterus. It may be necessary if vaginal bleeding becomes too heavy or if there is a risk of infection.

Depending on the chosen treatment, follow-up with a urine pregnancy test, blood test, or ultrasound may be required.

AFTER A SPONTANEOUS ABORTION

- Do not use intravaginal menstrual products (tampon, menstrual cup) during the current bleeding. You can start using them again during your next period.
- Wait for 48 hours after the bleeding has stopped to have sexual intercourse.
- It is usually recommended to wait until the next period has ended before attempting to have another pregnancy in order to give the uterus time to recover and to be both physically and emotionally ready.
- Pregnancy symptoms such as sensitive and engorged breasts as well as a rounded abdomen can last for several days.
- Vaginal bleeding may persist for about 7 to 10 days.

EMOTIONAL REACTIONS AND GRIEF

Everyone reacts differently to a spontaneous abortion, depending on their personality and personal history. A miscarriage can be a challenge, while those around you may downplay its significance.

Loved ones sometimes don't know what to say or how to react, and may end up being hurtful even though they want to offer their support.

Loss following a miscarriage is generally experienced in 5 stages:

- **Denial:** Characterized by a surreal feeling and not admitting the pregnancy has ended.
- **Anger:** Marked by crying, anger, and hostility.
- **Bargaining:** A period of deep sorrow and rising awareness of the permanent nature of the loss.
- **Resolution:** The beginning of social and emotional reinvestment. The loss of the pregnancy will never be forgotten, but you learn to live with the grief.
- **Acceptance:** The final stage in which you find acceptance for the loss and achieve newfound stability.

These emotions may require professional assistance to help you navigate this difficult time.



Go to the emergency department of your nearest hospital centre if:

- Your bleeding increases and you need to change more than one sanitary pad every hour;
- You have the following signs and symptoms: sweating, weakness, paleness, loss of consciousness, or decreased general condition;
- You have abdominal pain that is not relieved through acetaminophen or anti-inflammatory drugs (e.g., ibuprofen, naproxen);
- Your oral temperature is 38,0°C or higher, with or without shivering;
- Your bleeding persists beyond 10 days, or you have foul vaginal discharge (signs of infection).

DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?



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References

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<https://www.inspq.qc.ca/information-perinatale/fiches/deces-et-deuil-perinatal>

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