

Patient Information Leaflet

Silent Miscarriage

(blighted ovum)

Produced By: Early Pregnancy Assessment Unit

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What is a silent miscarriage?

The term Silent miscarriage or blighted ovum refers to a pregnancy in which the pregnancy sac develops in the womb but the sac is empty and does not contain a developing embryo. This is usually discovered between the 8th and 11th week of pregnancy, sometimes at a routine scan, and can be totally unexpected.

Why does it happen?

It is thought to be due to an error in the early development of the embryo, commonly due to a chromosomal abnormality in that particular pregnancy. This is not related to anything you or your partner did or didn't do, and is not anyone's fault.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Silent miscarriage often causes no symptoms at all. Signs can include

- A missed or late menstrual period
- Minor abdominal cramping
- Minor vaginal spotting or bleeding
- A positive pregnancy test

Why did I feel pregnant when there was no baby there?

It is usual to feel pregnant and the pregnancy test is positive as the hormones that give symptoms of pregnancy are produced by the placental tissue, not by the embryo. Many women assume their pregnancies are on track as their HCG level (pregnancy hormone) is increasing. The placenta can continue to grow and support itself without an embryo for some time, and pregnancy hormones can continue to rise, which would lead a woman to believe she is still pregnant. A diagnosis is usually not made until an ultrasound test shows either an empty womb or empty pregnancy sac.

How is this treated?

There are 3 options which will be explained by a Doctor these are:

ERPC (Surgical Management) This is an operation to remove the products of conception and is done under general or local anaesthetic. This is a day case procedure and you will need someone to collect you from the hospital and be with you overnight.

Medical Management This is a combination of pills and vaginal pessaries which will speed up the natural process and does not require an anaesthetic. Some women experience quite severe abdominal cramps as well as heavy bleeding.

Expectant or Conservative management Some women prefer to wait and let the miscarriage happen naturally. It can be difficult to know what to expect and when (it may take up to 2 weeks for the miscarriage to complete) but most women will experience abdominal cramps, possibly severe as well as heavy bleeding.

Will it happen again?

This is unlikely. Silent miscarriage is a chance event and most women go on to have a successful pregnancy.

I feel as if I've no right to grieve, if there was no baby

You are grieving for what would have been. You *were* pregnant and you may react like many women or couples who lose a baby at any time during pregnancy. Sadness, a sense of loss, depression, anger and feelings of guilt are all common and distressing reactions to miscarriage.

Some people adjust quickly, while others may take longer. Over the next few days and weeks you may experience emotional ups and downs this is a normal reaction to grief.

Future Pregnancy

There is no fixed time you should wait to conceive again but it is a good idea to wait until you have had at least one period. This gives you time to grieve before embarking on another pregnancy and also allows your body time to recover.

Any preconception care you have been following should continue, such as

- Reducing your alcohol and caffeine intake
- Stopping smoking
- Taking folic acid

If you are unsure whether you wish to try for another pregnancy, it is advisable to consider your contraceptive needs during this time.

Some supporting organisations

The Miscarriage Association

www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk

Contact numbers

Early Pregnancy Assessment Unit 01983 552175

Accident and Emergency (Beacon Healthcare) 01983 534640.

You can get further information on all sorts of health issues through NHS interactive available through Sky TV or online at: <http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/>

For Health advice and out of hours GP service please call the NHS 111 service on: 111

We Value Your Views On Our Service

If you wish to comment on the care which you, your relative or friend has received, we will be pleased to hear from you. Please speak to the person in charge of the ward, clinic or service in the first instance or ask them to contact the Quality Team. If you wish to contact them directly, telephone on 534850.

Alternatively you may prefer to write to:

Chief Executive
Isle Of Wight NHS Trust
St Mary's Hospital
Newport
Isle of Wight
PO30 5TG

All NHS sites are no smoking areas.

If you would like help and advice to stop smoking please call: Freephone 0800 169 0 169 to talk to the NHS Smoking Helpline.

Ref: **OG/SMis/1**