

Miscarriage (also called early pregnancy loss) is when there is pregnancy loss before 20 weeks. For women who know they are pregnant, about 10 to 20 in 100 pregnancies end in miscarriage. Most miscarriages, 8 out of 10, happen in the first trimester before the 12<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy. Miscarriage in the second trimester, between 13 and 19 weeks, happens in 1 to 5 in pregnancies. Pregnancy loss that happens after 20 weeks is called stillbirth.

Miscarriage is very common. Some research suggests that more than 30 percent of pregnancies end in miscarriage, and many end before a person even knows they are pregnant. Most people who miscarry go on to have a healthy pregnancy later.

There are many reasons why a miscarriage may happen, although the cause is often not identified.

If a miscarriage happens during the first trimester of pregnancy (the first 3 months), it is usually caused by problems with the unborn baby (fetus). About 3 in every 4 miscarriages happen during this period.

If a miscarriage happens after the first trimester of pregnancy, it may be the result of things like an underlying health condition in the mother.

Late miscarriages may also be caused by an infection around the baby, which leads to the bag of waters breaking before any pain or bleeding. Sometimes they can be caused by the neck of the womb opening too soon.

Sometimes, miscarriages happen because the pregnancy develops outside the womb. This is known as an ectopic pregnancy. Ectopic pregnancies are potentially serious as there's a risk you could experience internal bleeding.

Symptoms of an ectopic pregnancy may include: persistent and severe tummy pain, usually on one side, vaginal bleeding, or spotting, commonly after the pain has started, pain in your shoulder tip, diarrhea, and vomiting, feeling very faint and lightheaded, and possibly fainting. Symptoms of an ectopic pregnancy usually appear between weeks 5 and 14 of the pregnancy. If you experience any of these symptoms, visit your nearest emergency room department immediately. If you are unable to travel, call 911 and ask for an ambulance.

Not all miscarriages can be prevented. However, you can take steps to help maintain a healthy pregnancy. Here are a few recommendations:

Get regular prenatal care throughout your pregnancy.

Avoid alcohol, drugs, and smoking while pregnant.

Maintain a healthy weight before and during pregnancy.

Avoid infections. Wash your hands thoroughly, and stay away from people who are already sick.

Limit the amount of caffeine to no more than 200 milligrams per day.

Take prenatal vitamins to help ensure that you and your developing fetus get enough nutrients.

Eat a healthy, well-balanced diet with lots of fruits and vegetables.

Remember that having a miscarriage does not mean you will not conceive again in the future.  
Most women who miscarry have healthy pregnancies later.

Sherry Eagle,  
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