

The background is a light blue gradient with several realistic water droplets of various sizes scattered across the surface. The droplets have highlights and shadows, giving them a three-dimensional appearance.

COPING WITH GRIEF FROM PREGNANCY LOSS

“A MOTHER’S GRIEF IS AS TIMELESS AS HER LOVE.”

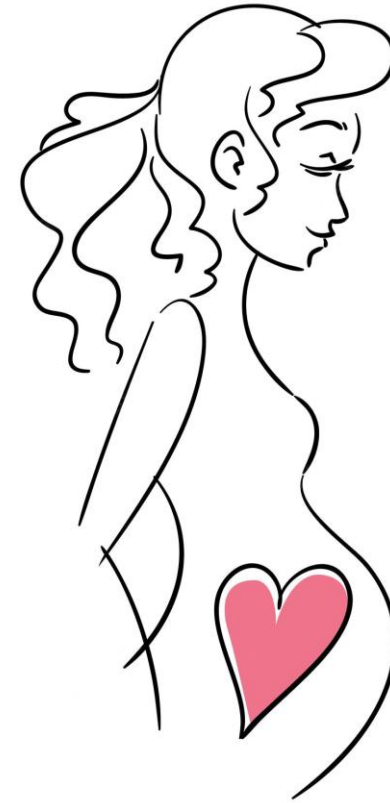
-JOANNE CACCIATORE

WHAT IS PREGNANCY LOSS?

ACCORDING TO WWW.STANFORDCHILDRENS.ORG PREGNANCY LOSS CAN OCCUR IN AS MANY AS ONE IN FOUR PREGNANCIES AND MOST HAPPEN IN THE FIRST TRIMESTER WITH MANY OF THOSE HAPPENING BEFORE THE MOTHER EVEN KNOWS SHE'S PREGNANT.

PREGNANCY LOSS INCLUDES:

- EMBRYONIC PREGNANCY
- MISCARRIAGE
- ECTOPIC PREGNANCY
- MOLAR PREGNANCY
- STILLBIRTH



WHAT IS AN EMBRYONIC PREGNANCY?

An embryonic pregnancy is a pregnancy where the egg is fertilized but never develops into an embryo. Also known as a blighted ovum but that is an outdated term. This is the single leading cause of miscarriage.

With this type of pregnancy, a loss can occur before the mother even knows that she is pregnant, otherwise, it is detected at the first doctor's appointment. The mother may feel symptoms of pregnancy and even still get a positive pregnancy test but once there is an ultrasound, if the mother has an embryonic pregnancy, there is no fetal heartbeat detected. Your OBGYN will have you come in for an additional ultrasound to confirm a few days after it is first detected.



Typical pregnancy

Anembryonic pregnancy

This kind of pregnancy is usually caused by chromosomal abnormalities and is **not the mother's fault**.

It is treated in three ways: letting nature take its course (often within 1 to 2 weeks), medications, or having the empty sack surgically removed. There is no right way to treat this so please consult your OBGYN.

Source: <https://flo.health/pregnancy/pregnancy-health/complications/anembryonic-pregnancy>

WHAT IS A MISCARRIAGE?

This is a pregnancy loss before 13 weeks of pregnancy.

There are 5 types of miscarriage that can occur:

- Complete – All fetal tissue has been expelled.
- Incomplete – Not all fetal tissue has been expelled, consult our physician.
- Inevitable – The process of miscarriage is in the process. This will be seen at a
- Missed – The embryo has passed away in the womb but expulsion has not begun. This will be seen at a doctor's appointment.
- Threatened – Symptoms are present but a miscarriage does not occur.

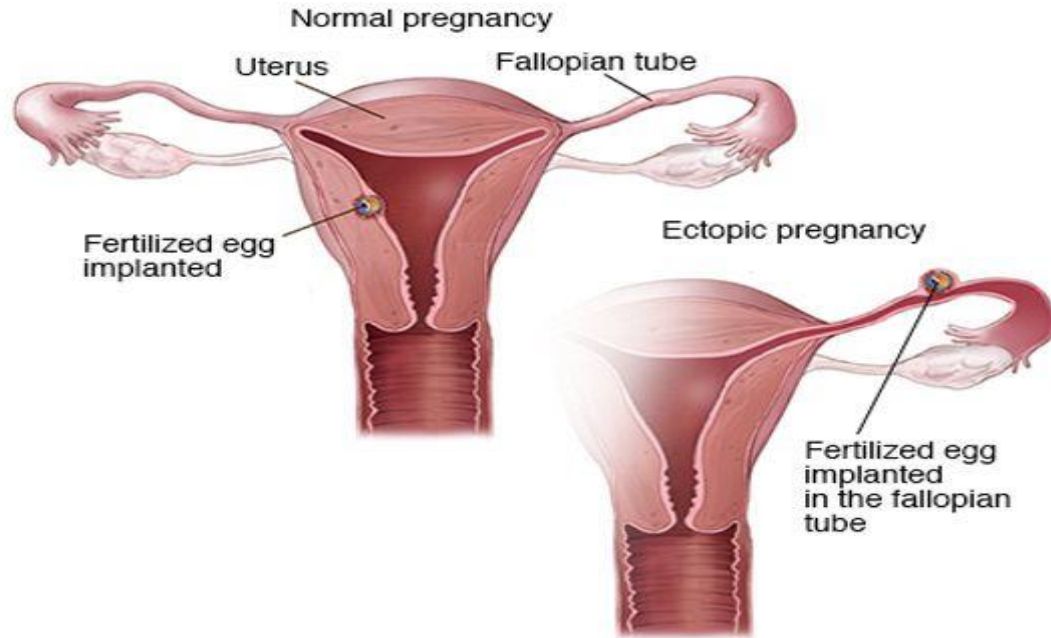
Information source:

<https://www.shecares.com/pregnancy/complications/miscarriage>

Picture source: <https://growcounseling.com/miscarriage-matters-part-3/>



WHAT IS AN ECTOPIC PREGNANCY?



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An ectopic pregnancy, often also known as a tubal pregnancy, is when the fetus develops outside of the uterus. This may be in the fallopian tube, the cervix, pelvis, or abdomen.

Unfortunately, a fetus that implants in an area that is not the uterus will not develop to term. The uterus is a very special organ that will specifically support the growing baby's development.

"The uterus is a unique organ that can stretch dramatically with a growing pregnancy," said Dr. Jennifer Kickham, an obstetrician and gynecologist and the medical director of the outpatient gynecology clinic at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. "No other tissue in the body has the ability to grow to accommodate a nine-pound baby or twins," she told Live Science.

Ectopic pregnancies are very dangerous and require immediate medical attention. If the fetus is left to grow it can rupture the fallopian tube or ovary or cause infection or severe internal bleeding. Symptoms of an ectopic pregnancy can occur between 6 to 10 weeks after a missed period, or it can be caught at the mother's first ultrasound. Symptoms are vaginal bleeding or severe abdominal pain, usually on one side of the abdomen. Some people, however, have no symptoms until the fallopian tube ruptures. This is why it is important to get early medical care for pregnancy.

SEE [SOURCE](#) FOR MORE INFORMATION

Source: <https://www.livescience.com/51711-ectopic-pregnancy.html>

WHAT IS A MOLAR PREGNANCY?

A molar pregnancy — also known as a hydatidiform mole — is a rare complication of pregnancy characterized by the abnormal growth of trophoblasts, the cells that normally develop into the placenta.

This type of pregnancy is rare but can have serious complications — including a rare form of cancer — and requires early treatment.

Please see [source](#) for more information.

WHAT IS A STILLBIRTH?

Stillbirth is when the fetus dies after 20 weeks of pregnancy and can occur before, or even during, delivery.

A stillbirth is considered early when it occurs between week 20 to week 27.

A late stillbirth is between weeks 28 to 36.

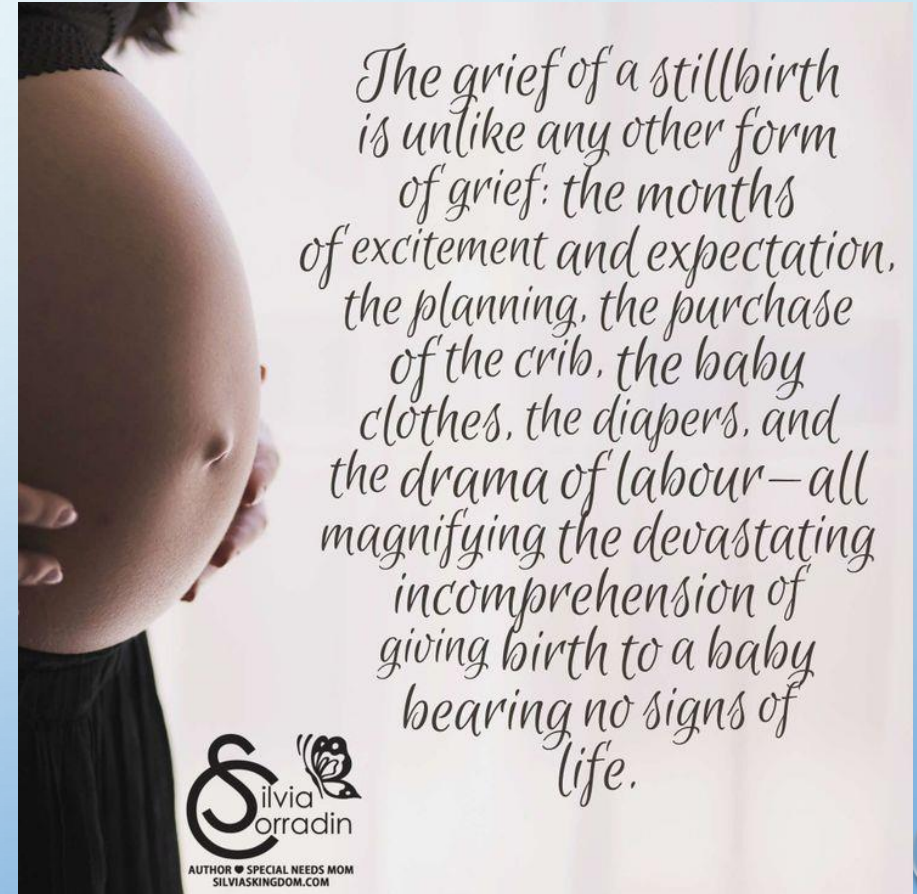
And a term stillbirth occurs at 37+ weeks.

Roughly 24,000 babies a year are born still, approximately 1 in 160 births

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/stillbirth/facts.html>

Photo source:

<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/58476495152971255/>



WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL CAUSES OF PREGNANCY LOSS?

- Abnormal embryo development.
- Hormone problems in the mother. These include low levels of progesterone or a thyroid problem.
- High blood pressure or diabetes in the mother.
- Problems in the uterus. These include scar tissue inside the uterus, abnormally shaped uterus, or fibroids.
- Opening of the uterus cannot stay closed during pregnancy (incompetent cervix).
- Infection from germs. These include cytomegalovirus (CMV), mycoplasma, chlamydia, ureaplasma, listeria, or toxoplasma.
- Autoimmune diseases such as lupus. These cause the body to make antibodies against its own normal tissues. Other autoimmune problems include antiphospholipid antibody syndrome.
- Injury or trauma.
- Exposure to toxic substances and chemicals, such as anti-cancer medicines.

Stanford Children's health. Stanford Children's Health - Lucile Packard Children's Hospital Stanford. (n.d.).

Retrieved June 3, 2022, from <https://www.stanfordchildrens.org/en/topic/default?id=overview-of-pregnancy-loss-90-P02466>

WHO IS AT RISK?

Most pregnancy losses are single events, with most women going on to have very happy, healthy pregnancies and babies later on, especially if the loss happens for unknown reasons. However, if there have been 3 or more losses or recurrent losses, there will likely be more testing needed.

Things that can make a pregnancy loss more likely are:

- Being an older mother
- Having a pregnancy loss in the past
- Smoking cigarettes
- Using alcohol
- Drinking more caffeine
- Using cocaine
- Having a low folate level. Folate is a B vitamin.
- Being under or overweight

With proper medical care and precautions, these factors can be minimized.

LIFE AFTER A PREGNANCY LOSS



Life after a pregnancy loss can be overwhelming not only is the mom's body changing rapidly but depending on when the loss occurred her body could likely have everlasting changes, changes that would occur if the mother had gone full term and given birth to a healthy baby. Such as hormonal changes, weight gain, changed breasts and hips, plus many other changes long-term and temporary.

Emotional changes are also overwhelming. Women after a pregnancy loss can feel a loss of self-trust and self-compassion towards their bodies. These good emotions are often replaced with anger, guilt, disappointment, and frustration in themselves and their bodies. "Even after the body starts to recover, women can have a hard time reconnecting with their bodies, according to Nancy Jo Reedy, MPH, CNM, FACNM"

Depression and anxiety are very common after a miscarriage and many women (nearly a third) can even meet the criteria for being diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder a month later with 18% still meeting the criteria nine months later. While these feelings can last if they persist it's good to seek professional care, especially if these feelings are worsening or effect your daily life.

(Author Unavailable) *Emotional healing after a miscarriage: A guide for women, partners, family, and friends.* GU

MSN. (2021, October 13). Retrieved June 25, 2022, from

<https://online.nursing.georgetown.edu/blog/emotional-healing-after-miscarriage-guide-women-partners-family-friends/>

Photo credit: <https://media.istockphoto.com/photos/greiving-picture->

[id483405862?k=20&m=483405862&s=612x612&w=0&h=Jizpk1P92U4ygMQShOTbRAB2duSinfh04qzduBHMMy_8=](https://media.istockphoto.com/photos/greiving-picture-id483405862?k=20&m=483405862&s=612x612&w=0&h=Jizpk1P92U4ygMQShOTbRAB2duSinfh04qzduBHMMy_8=)

HOW CAN WE COPE WHEN WE'VE HAD A PREGNANCY LOSS?

After a pregnancy loss, it may be hard for mothers and their families to know what to do next, especially when the loss is early on and nature just has to run its course. It often seems like all you want to do is have life stand still for a good long while.

First remember that grief, especially the grief that comes from the loss of a child, even one that you just found out about through a pregnancy test, is unique. No one person or family's journey will be the same. So how can we cope?

- Self-care, try your hardest to stay hydrated, eat healthily, get some light exercise, and enough sleep, this will help your body to heal properly. Try doing things that you love, binge-watch your favorite show, read your favorite book, and get out into nature a little more often, take a short walk.
- Remember that 85% of women that experience a pregnancy loss can go on to have a healthy pregnancy. But take your time, this is your family's choice, no one else can tell you when you are ready.
- If the depression, grief, guilt, or PTSD seem to be lasting longer or affecting your day-to-day life in a significant way, then it may be time to seek out help from a trusted family doctor or better yet a mental health counselor that can help you sort through all the complicated emotions and very deep grieving that you and your family are working through.



HOW CAN WE LOVE AND SUPPORT OTHERS THAT HAVE GONE THROUGH PREGNANCY LOSS?



Many partners, spouses, children, and extended family are at a loss for words when they find out that a pregnancy loss has occurred. Often times they don't know what to say so they don't say anything at all and this breeds an environment where many may feel that they are walking on eggshells. This is especially difficult if a family has waited until after the first trimester to tell family and friends but the loss occurs before the announcement is made. This puts the family in the position of deciding to make the announcement of the pregnancy, and the loss, at the same time. Which often feels too daunting.

If this is the case for your family, you may still want to tell your immediate family so that you have a strong support system. Or you may decide to keep it just among you, your partner, and your children. No matter who you decide to tell acknowledging that the pregnancy happened and that your baby was real can be very cathartic.

- Consider doing something to honor your baby.
 - If you have an ultrasound picture or other memorial item, consider framing it.
 - Writing a letter.
 - Or holding some sort of memorial service.

HOW CAN WE LOVE AND SUPPORT OTHERS THAT HAVE GONE THROUGH PREGNANCY LOSS? CONTINUED

Remember there is no right or wrong way to grieve. Even members of the same family experiencing the same loss can experience the grieving process very differently. Some people grieve inwardly, others grieve openly and want and need to talk about it. Both are okay. Between a husband and wife, you must talk this over though, learning each other's grieving/coping mechanisms can be vital to keeping your marriage healthy. Do not compare your grief journey to any other person's grief journey.

When you feel it is time or that you are ready to discuss trying to get pregnant again, do so with this in mind, another pregnancy won't shorten your grief. It may bring a lot of hope, but it can also bring a lot of worries. You, your partner/spouse, children, or other family and loved ones may worry that another pregnancy loss may occur, no matter how statistically unlikely.

Just remember to take your time, practice a lot of self-care, take care of mommy, and hold on to the hope that another pregnancy loss is unlikely.



COUPLES AND PREGNANCY LOSS

Remember that even close couples that have been married for decades can find themselves grieving in different ways.

For Mommy:

- Remember that not only do fathers grieve differently but it is also less likely, especially for first-time fathers, to develop a strong attachment to the baby before 20 weeks. They still experience loss but it can be different than moms.

For Dad:

- Make sure that mom knows that you know the loss of the pregnancy was not her fault, as stated before she will probably be feeling a lot of guilt and uncertainty.
- Even when your grieving/coping style is different, if your partner/spouse grieves openly it is very important to support them by letting them talk and process openly. Remember to listen and be open to processing your loss together.
- Help come up with ways to break the news to other children and family and loved ones, especially if the loss is unexpected and late-term.

For Both of you:

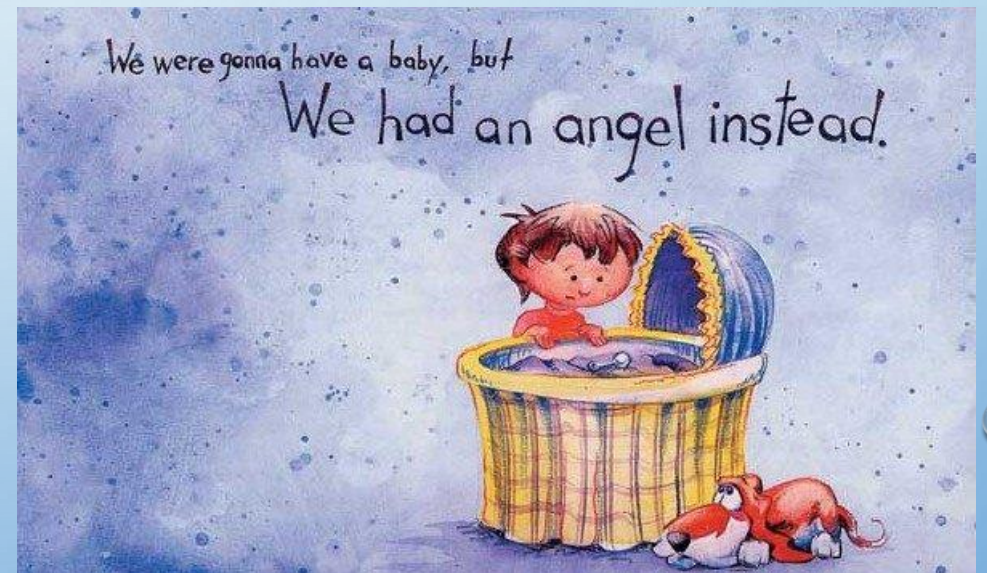
- Don't feel pressured to start trying again right away, it is healthy and normal to want to wait a while before conceiving again. This is your family, your grief, and your timeline.



FAMILIES AND PREGNANCY LOSS: HELPING OUR CHILDREN COPE WITH THE LOSS

Depending on when you miscarry and the age of your other children along with your own recovery and the recovery of your spouse/partner you may also need to help your other children through any grief that they may feel as well. This is important because many siblings can feel invisible during this unthinkable time. But there are ways to help your children through their grief. Remember the more they know, the better they will cope.

- Encourage your child(ren) to participate in some way in the memorial. Write a note or draw a picture.
- If the loss was later in pregnancy give your child(ren) the option of seeing the baby or even touching them, but don't force it, let it be their choice.
- Encourage them to express their feelings, even anger or fear, and reassure them that their feelings are normal.
- Allow them to be a part of your grief, cry with them, and be honest by not hiding your feelings. They learn by example.
- Once you are healed and a normal routine can return, let it return. It will help them to feel safe and to be reassured that everything will be alright.
- Reassure your child(ren) that the lost baby is a deeply loved member of your family, one that will never be forgotten. This will reassure them that they too are needed and loved.
- Use truthful language. Especially with younger children who then may end up fearing being lost or going to sleep.



FAMILIES AND PREGNANCY LOSS: HELPING OUR CHILDREN COPE WITH THE LOSS CONTINUED

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Not all siblings walk hand in hand,
for some are in heaven while others
walk on land.

- Listen to your children and answer their questions. Yes, It will be hard to do this at times but honesty and openness can help both you and your child to heal. Them asking questions is healthy for all ages.
- Share your faith, it not only will help you but it can help bring them comfort as well.
- Reassure your child that they are in no way to blame for the loss of their sibling and that they also don't have to worry about dying themselves. This is important if the baby was alive for a time, maybe they were a micro-preemie and they got to meet the baby.
- When children are experiencing grief, know that it is very normal for them to regress in behavior or act out in irrational ways. This is them telling you that they need your help, love, and support.
- Give your child(ren) as much attention as possible. Give hugs and cuddles, rock them, read to them, and most importantly listen to them.
- Don't keep their loss a secret. Make sure that anyone else caring for your child, like a teacher, knows what is going on. That way the other caregivers have a chance to show support and compassion.

Signs and symptoms of grief in children:

- Sadness
- Loneliness
- Disbelief
- Alarm
- Fear
- Bodily Distress
- Anger
- Guilt
- Depression
- Regression
- School Problems
- Anxiety

LIFE AFTER PREGNANCY LOSS: MOVING FORWARD SEEKING HELP

We've talked about what it means to have a pregnancy loss, what types there are, and the causes and potential risks. Then we talked about recovery. Recovery for mom, dad, siblings, and the spousal/partner relationship. However, every situation and every family is different and you have to remember that while there is life after pregnancy loss, it's up to you when and how to move forward.

If you do find yourself in need of help or if you just feel like you will forever be stuck in the depths of your grief there is a lot of support for you and your family.

- Seek out help through a trusted physician or OBGYN, they have plenty of resources they can help you to find.
- Seek out a therapist, talking to someone that isn't in the middle of your grief can help be a great comfort to you and your family.
- And ask for help from family, loved ones, and church members.
- And if it becomes too heavy call the National Suicide Hotline at 1-800-273-8255 or go to <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>



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