

A miscarriage is defined as the loss of a pregnancy before 20 weeks gestation. Miscarriage happens when a pregnancy stops growing. Eventually, the pregnancy tissue will pass out of the body. Some women will feel crampy, period-like pain and in most cases there will be vaginal bleeding. Most spontaneous miscarriages (75 to 80 per cent) occur in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. It is estimated that 1 in 4 pregnancies end in miscarriage.

A miscarriage usually occurs because the pregnancy is not developing properly. The development of a baby from a female and a male cell is a very complicated process. If something goes wrong with the process, the pregnancy will stop developing. Miscarriages are more common in older women than younger women, largely because chromosomal abnormalities are more common with increasing age. Another cause of miscarriage may be that the developing pregnancy did not embed itself properly into the lining of the uterus (womb). The natural reaction of the uterus is to expel the non-viable pregnancy.

Nothing can be done to stop a miscarriage once it has begun. Treatment is aimed at avoiding heavy bleeding and infection. It is also aimed at looking after you, physically and emotionally. If you've recently had a miscarriage, you're likely aware of the unique physical and emotional challenges that come with the experience. Yet sometimes women have complications after a miscarriage as well. For example, conditions such as excessive bleeding, infection, or depression may occur following a miscarriage.