

**Patient
Information**

Recurrent Pregnancy Loss

Introduction

Miscarriage can have a major emotional effect on parents and their families; feelings of loss, grief or a sense of failure are all normal. When miscarriage happens 3 or more times in a row, it is called recurrent miscarriage and affects 1 in every 100 couples. We are sorry that you have suffered recurrent miscarriage, we hope that this leaflet will give you information and signpost you to further support to help during these difficult times.

Recurrent Pregnancy Loss Clinic

After a referral has been received to this clinic, you will be asked to have some blood tests. An appointment will also be arranged for you to have an ultrasound scan of your pelvis before your clinic appointment if required.

During your appointment a healthcare professional will discuss your test results, possible causes and potential treatment options.

Why does recurrent miscarriage happen?

No cause can be found for recurrent miscarriage in more than half of couples, however, most couples do go on to have a successful pregnancy. We do know that some factors increase the likelihood of miscarriage and few can cause recurrent miscarriage. We have listed the possible factors on the following pages.

Lifestyle

Being overweight, excessive alcohol consumption, smoking and too much caffeine can all increase the risk of miscarriage.

If you need help with stopping smoking, losing weight or reducing your alcohol intake we can refer you to 'Healthy lifestyles, Gloucestershire' who provide free support.

Excessive alcohol consumption is known to be harmful to a developing baby and drinking more than 5 units a week may increase the risk of miscarriage.

We would also advise you to aim for a BMI less than 30.

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The older you are, the greater your risk of having a miscarriage. For women aged over 40, more than 1 in 2 pregnancies end in miscarriage. The father's age, if above 40, is also associated with an increased risk of miscarriage.

Chromosome problems

Pregnancy tissue following a miscarriage can be tested for chromosomal problems (the building blocks of the cells within our bodies). In 2 to 5 couples in every 100 women with recurrent miscarriage, either partner may have an abnormality on one of their chromosomes. This abnormality can be passed on to the baby resulting in an early pregnancy loss. If a chromosome problem is identified then we will refer you to a genetic counsellor who can discuss the risks for future pregnancies and talk about your options.

Weak cervix

A weak cervix can cause a miscarriage in late pregnancy (14 to 23 weeks). If you have a history of this then you will be offered an ultrasound scan during your pregnancy to monitor the length of the cervix. Progesterone supplements or a stitch on the cervix may be advised if the cervix was noted to be short.

Shape of the uterus

Your womb will be checked for abnormalities in shape using an ultrasound scan. If any significant problems are found, you will be advised about any further investigations. Surgery may be needed depending on the severity of the abnormality.

Diabetes and thyroid problems

Poorly controlled diabetes and thyroid problems can be associated with miscarriages. These conditions do not cause recurrent miscarriage as long as they are treated and kept under control.

Infection

If an infection makes you very unwell, it can cause a miscarriage but it is not clear if it causes recurrent miscarriage.

**Patient
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This condition, a rare cause of recurrent miscarriage and late miscarriage, is called Antiphospholipid syndrome, (APS). A blood test when you are not pregnant can be done to check for this.

Two positive tests, 3 months apart, are required to confirm a positive diagnosis of APS. If you are found to have this condition it can be treated with aspirin and blood thinning injections to improve live birth rates.

Unexplained recurrent miscarriage:

No cause can be found for recurrent miscarriage in more than half of couples. This can be very reassuring and most couples do go on to have a successful pregnancy.

Women with 3 or more miscarriages have a 4 in 10 chance of having another miscarriage. This means there is 6 in 10 chance of having a healthy pregnancy.

Supplements you can take:

Research shows that there is some benefit from taking the following:

Aspirin

Taking 2 x 75mg junior dispersible aspirin a day can help the development of a healthy placenta and your pregnancy.

Vitamin D and Folic acid

Taking vitamin D is important for the development of bones and teeth and may reduce your chance of miscarriage.

Folic acid helps in the development of the baby's spinal cord and nerves. It is important to take folic acid before you get pregnant to help reduce any problems later on. The current recommendations are 400mcg of folic acid and 10mcg of vitamin D once a day.

Progesterone

Progesterone, given as vaginal pessaries (400mg twice a day until 16 weeks) are a safe treatment and have been found to help women who have had 3 or more miscarriages in the event of bleeding during pregnancy.

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Looking forward

There is ongoing research into recurrent miscarriage carried out in other hospitals. If you would like to take part in this, your GP can refer you to one of the centres who may do some more tests to find out why you have had recurrent miscarriages and see if you would be suitable to join clinical trials looking at possible treatments.

We acknowledge that pregnancy after miscarriage can be a very anxious time.

Contact information

Recurrent Pregnancy Loss Team

Gloucestershire Royal Hospital

Email: ghn-tr.rpl@nhs.net

Further information

Caffeine calculator

Calculate your daily caffeine intake and tips for a healthy balanced diet.

Website: www.tommys.org/pregnancy-information/im-pregnant/nutrition-pregnancy/check-your-caffeine-intake-pregnancy

Miscarriage Association

The association provides support and information for people affected by pregnancy loss.

Website: www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk

Tommy's

This is a charity that gives information and support. Tommy's also funds research into miscarriage, stillbirth and premature birth.

Website: www.tommys.org/pregnancy-information/pregnancy-complications/baby-loss/miscarriage-information-and-support

Footsteps counselling and care

This is a charity that offers counselling support for people in the Gloucestershire area on pregnancy issues.

Website: www.footstepscandc.org.uk/

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Healthy lifestyles Gloucestershire

Offers support and advice to help people to stop smoking, lose weight, increase their exercise and eat healthily.

Website: www.hlsglos.org

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