



The Miscarriage Association

OF IRELAND

Information Pack

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The Miscarriage Association of Ireland
Carmichael Centre, North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7
Telephone: 01-8735702. Fax: 01-8735737
www.miscarriage.ie • Email: info@miscarriage.ie

Registered Charity Number CHY9738

ABOUT THE MISCARRIAGE ASSOCIATION

*The Association is a charitable body set up by, and with the support of women (and men) who themselves have been through miscarriages. We offer telephone and email support to bereaved parents. In addition, we hold monthly support group meetings and our website provides a wide variety of information. **Our aims are:-***

1. To increase awareness in the general public that all pregnancy loss is a bereavement and that the length of the pregnancy is not related to the depth of grief and sense of loss experienced.
2. To provide support, help and information for women and their families who have had, or are having a miscarriage and feel the need for help.
3. To make available such information about miscarriage, its effects and other allied information that is not already or easily available.
4. To provide a National Information Centre on all aspects of miscarriage. This includes the time afterwards when support and information are essential and very much needed.
5. To dispel the myths about miscarriage and no longer have it as a taboo subject. Ignorance is not bliss when it causes fear and anxiety to the person(s) involved.
6. To seek to effect change, with the support of the Medical Professions, where such changes have rendered themselves not only essential, but vital. Whilst we are only too aware of how over-worked doctors and other medical staff are, we nonetheless seek their individual support, help and advice.
7. To set up local groups throughout the country in order to bring about contact between those women who might otherwise suffer needlessly and perhaps worsening any possible long term effects. There are already groups functioning with great success.
8. To encourage women to openly and freely express their feelings, to allow themselves to cry and to grieve without fear of being told they are being selfish or to "shake themselves out of it".
9. To publish a Newsletter for distribution to Members. It will contain a selection of items, news from the local branches, items written by various men and women telling of their own experiences and feelings.

10. To give others the benefit of our own experiences and knowledge and to be to other women what we ourselves would have wanted had such a service been available at the time.

11. To try to fill the many gaps that lie within the present system that deals with the woman who has miscarried.

12. To learn more that others may suffer less.

13. To compile, print and distribute leaflets, posters and pamphlets that could be left in clinics, waiting rooms, ward-rooms, perhaps even handed to a patient by a medical practitioner: this way a woman is aware that help, support and information is available, if or when she needs it.

14. To become affiliated to as many relevant groups and associations in order that we may work together to provide the most efficient service possible and to combine information.

15. To reach a wider audience by providing up-to-date information on miscarriage on our website: www.miscarriage.ie.

This is only a brief guide to the Association; further details can be provided on request. The Association is open to further suggestions as to how we could better our services and further our aims.

All information is treated in the strictest confidence and we are only too pleased to be able to help any person who may choose to contact us.

We are a registered Charity Number CHY9738

COMING TO TERMS WITH YOUR MISCARRIAGE

1. You must be open about your own feelings, fears and anger. Communicate with your partner.
2. It helps to remember that what you are experiencing happens to many women, one in every five in fact.
3. Most couples do go on to have normal full term babies.
4. Each woman varies in the amount of pain she suffers at actual miscarriage stage. Women who have multiple miscarriages commonly report different degrees of pain experienced every time.
5. The sense of emotional loss however is universal. A miscarriage is a sudden unexpected loss of life. It shatters your hopes for children and fills you with doubts about the future.
6. Some people find it easier than others to express their feelings during times of distress. We believe that expressing those feelings to each other is an important part of getting through the crisis and promoting growth in your own relationship.
7. For the man, he must be aware that grieving is a necessary part of the process by which we adjust again to the normal routine of life after a personal tragedy. It is not a weakness for a man to feel sadness by showing emotion.
8. Because we lack effective methods of treatment for miscarriage, it is easy to become angry with doctors and medicine as a whole.
9. In general be discerning when you receive medical advice, ask questions about your medical care. Avoid drugs whenever possible during pregnancy, and when in doubt obtain other medical opinions.
10. Women friends, especially those with a personal experience of miscarriage, are often major sources of support. Sharing the physical as well as the emotional details seems to validate some of the emotions, as well as remove some of the mystery.

11. Some of us find great help and comfort in our own families. In many cases we are able to be taken care of by them in ways that we just could not be helped by anyone else.

12. In families who already have children at the time of the miscarriage, explaining the condition of the mother is essential. Children are aware, if only intuitively, that some disturbing event has occurred and they deserve some clarification appropriate to their ages. Additionally, sharing the experience with the whole family can be more supportive to the grieving parents.

13. The doctor who cares for us medically can be a very important source of advice and information. It is important to try to select someone who can deal with the emotional as well as the clinical aspects of miscarriage.

NORMAL PREGNANCY AFTER MISCARRIAGE

1. Invest time and effort in choosing an obstetrician or midwife who is right for you. Be open about all the emotional, medical and financial issues that are important to you in the area of your own pregnancy before you agree to be that person's patient.

2. It is common to feel anxious about your pregnancy if you have had a prior miscarriage or miscarriages. If you are worried, depressed or frightened during pregnancy, seek professional help so that you can work out your feelings.

3. The Miscarriage Association provides support during subsequent pregnancies.

EMOTIONS YOU GO THROUGH

1. Anger - Why me? Other women succeed effortlessly, what happens to you seems completely unfair.
2. Disappointment, your hopes and excitement are crushed.
3. There is often a reaction of pity from outsiders which you dislike.
4. Guilt, had I neglected nutrition or rest? Had I been too anxious? etc.
5. The difference between a woman who has had one miscarriage and to those who have more is timing and intensity. Physical fear is part of every woman's experience.
6. Feeling sad or depressed for weeks or even months after a miscarriage seems to be the norm. Many women say they were unable to get over their feelings of sadness until they were pregnant again. When we miscarry, our body hormonal balance changes as abruptly as they do after childbirth. Hence we are subject to as much chemically induced emotional disorder with none of the usual rewards. There is no baby, no happy visitors showering us with gifts and attention, no approval, no fun.
7. Many women experience guilt and become detectives, continuing to look back for months after they have miscarried, looking for some probable cause in their own behaviour just prior to the miscarriage. Some blame medical staff, feeling they could have done more.
8. Many women after discussing their miscarriage with outsiders, made themselves feel guiltier.
9. There comes a sense of relief period, that you have come out of it alive and that you can try again. But don't be surprised if after a period of relief you find yourself once again depressed, angry or sad.
10. For some, the period of adjustment goes on for many years whilst for others it is much shorter. There is no right or wrong interval, after which you adjust to your emotional feelings. All of us are different. About the best you can do is to be open to your needs and the needs of those close to you. If you need outside help, seek it openly.

Remember the emotional aspect of the miscarriage is probably the most difficult. Allow yourself all the time you need.

YOUR PARTNER'S EMOTIONS

- 1.** The events in the hospital are very difficult for men. They often feel powerless and frustrated at a time when they want very much to help their loved ones.
- 2.** Men should accept that it is normal to feel many intense emotions after the miscarriage including disbelief, sadness, anger, frustration and guilt.
- 3.** Adjusting to the loss takes time. It is acceptable for men to feel the emotional effects of the miscarriage for weeks and often months afterwards. There is a common series of events that people go through in the grieving process and this does not often happen quickly.
- 4.** Men often blame their partner for the miscarriage (and vice-versa). Both need to accept that neither of them is to blame for the miscarriage.
- 5.** Guilt feelings may arrive after the miscarriage, especially about sexual relations during pregnancy. There is no scientific evidence that links sexual intercourse or any kind of love making during pregnancy to miscarriage.
- 6.** Differences in the way that men and women express their emotions may cause tensions in the relationship. It is important for men to be open about their feelings so that their partner understands they too have suffered a loss.
- 7.** If you find that you are fighting about many things with your partner, it is time to seek professional counselling. Avoid allowing the issue of the miscarriage to become the focus for all the problems in your relationship.
- 8.** Most women seem to want to talk to their men about what has happened. They want to share their sadness aloud and to be reassured of their partner's love. They want to relieve their guilt feelings and talk about the future of their relationship. Men want this too but find it difficult to initiate the talk.

AFTER A MISCARRIAGE

Your Physical Health

Bleeding This should decrease in seven to 10 days. If it does not, or becomes heavier or smells offensive, contact your GP or midwife. Keep using sanitary towels, not tampons, until it stops.

Breasts Your breasts may be tender for several days and depending on how many weeks pregnant you were, they may leak milk. Wear a supportive bra until your breasts are comfortable.

Periods Generally, if you have a regular cycle, this will return in four to six weeks.

Sex You need two to three weeks for your body to recover, then it depends how you and your partner feel - it can take time to be interested again. Be loving and understanding about how you both feel.

Fatigue You may feel tired for a couple of weeks and if so you must rest. If you work, take a week or so off. Your GP can give you a sick leave certificate.

Your Emotional Health

Miscarriage can shake you and your partner and you will probably experience ups and downs. Some people adjust quickly, others take a long time; you will find the number of 'good' days slowly increases but a memory or an anniversary can bring it all back to you. Everyone experiences different feelings but they can include anger, frustration, despair and bitterness. Some women cry a lot, which may release some of the pain and tension, while some men find it hard to talk about their feelings. You may both have different ways of coping so be understanding and make sure you have plenty of time together.

If you want to talk to someone who has been through miscarriage and will listen to you, contact the Miscarriage Association, or talk to your GP, midwife or health visitor about your feelings.

Your Baby

You may want to know the sex of your baby - before three months this is impossible to see but after three months babies are more developed. If you have a query, talk to your midwife or GP about it.

Your Family

If you have other children they may be bewildered at what is happening. If they knew you were pregnant, explain simply what has happened to your baby -your health visitor can give you support and advice on this. Children can get frightened when their parents are distressed and unhappy so it is important to give them time and attention and stick to familiar routines. Your parents may also be very upset for you. It can help to talk to them.

Your Friends

Many people find one of the hardest things after a miscarriage is meeting people again. You may find you can talk easily to some friends and that they understand or share your feelings. Others may seem not to care and even avoid you - it may be because they are uncomfortable with death and frightened to ask how you feel or say how sorry they are.

HELPING A FRIEND OVERCOME A MISCARRIAGE

Friends can be most helpful at a time like this. You don't have to say anything. Just be there, willing to listen. Many women need to talk over and over about their experience of miscarriage and fear that people will tire of the repetition.

Let your concern be genuine. Don't be afraid to openly talk about the baby and the mother's feelings of loss.

Be there for her. Try to be there for the father also. He may seem to be preoccupied with his partner's health but remember that he has lost his baby too.

Allow them to express their feelings even if you differ from their opinions.

Allow them to talk about the baby they have lost as often as they need to. Try to remember that their future has been altered and this can be very difficult to come to terms with.

Help out with the shopping etc. without taking over. Practical help can be badly needed.

Give more attention to other children who may be in the family. Time alone for the couple can be precious.

Do not avoid the couple because you are uncomfortable. Try be in tune with their needs be it for silence or talk.

Stick with the conversation. Don't change it. You have no idea how they feel unless you have experienced a similar loss.

Never say *"You can try for another child"* or *"You're young yet, you have plenty of time."* Assuming they can have another child, it could never replace the baby they have just lost.

You may think how lucky they are to have other children - keep it to yourself. Children are not interchangeable.

Do not rush "the back to normal" routine. Very often it's months later when a woman reaches rock bottom. When most people think she should be well on the road to recovery it's often the worst time for her and a time when she needs most support.

As with any form of bereavement there is no time limit on the grieving process and recovery.

MISCARRIAGE IN THE PAST

To have lost your baby a long time ago does not take away the memories, pain and hurt you remember.

Babies lost in the past were sadly supposed to be forgotten in the false hope that to erase these babies from people's memories would take away the pain from the parents also.

How wrong this was - for when a woman loses her baby time may heal the pain but will never erase the memories. Memories are precious and should always be treasured.

You may have carried a lot of guilt, sadness, anger and frustration at having lost a much loved baby and then having to try to get on with your life as if nothing had happened.

Being told that maybe it was a blessing or God's will was not very helpful and if anything added to the anger and pain of losing your baby.

You would not have had mementoes such as scan pictures or if your baby was lost later in the pregnancy, photos of your baby so maybe if you could ever have been able to talk openly about your baby the grief could have been acknowledged and eased.

It is never too late to do this. Most people nowadays would not find it strange to hear how hard it must have been for you to get on with life after your miscarriage and how, most women, if only to close friends, would count these babies in when discussing how many children they have.

Sadly, some men found it really difficult to understand how deep their partner's love could be for their unborn child so in their lack of understanding were of little or no comfort.

On the other hand some men openly showed emotion at their loss and couples together could be there for each other on days when it seemed to hurt most, i.e. the baby's due date or the anniversary.

It is never too late to acknowledge your loss and to acknowledge your baby. You could plant a tree or bush in your garden or a favourite place you have.

Maybe write the baby a letter or compose a poem or write about how you felt at the time or try to attend a service for your baby. All this can really help you keep your memories alive.

The Miscarriage Association is always here to listen to anyone who has lost their baby so don't be afraid to write or call no matter how long you have been bereaved.

Sometimes to talk to another woman who has suffered miscarriage also can be of great help.

MEMORIAL STONES

The Miscarriage Association of Ireland is delighted that we currently have five memorial stones in place. These stones are dedicated to all babies lost through miscarriage and ectopic pregnancy and all babies whose lives were too short. Some babies have their own resting place in a family plot or a grave but some who only got to share our lives briefly do not and so their families sometimes need a memorial or a nice peaceful place to visit and think of them.

It is our aim to place Memorial Stones in as many locations around the country as possible. Currently, we are planning our next Memorial Stone in the Cork Region. If you are interested in getting a Memorial Stone placed in a cemetery near you and are in a position to liaise with the cemetery regarding placement of the stone please contact us and we would be happy to discuss further.

Our memorial stones are at the following locations:

Glasnevin Cemetery

Our first memorial stone was placed in the Holy Angel's plot, Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin 11 in November 1999. In the Spring of 2001 we also placed two memorial seats where people could sit and reflect while visiting the cemetery.

Deansgrange Cemetery

The Miscarriage Association of Ireland was delighted to place our second Memorial Stone in the Plot of the Angels in Deansgrange Cemetery on Saturday 11th October 2008.

St. Theresa's Church

The Miscarriage Association of Ireland unveiled it's third Memorial Stone in the grounds of St. Theresa's Church, Donore Avenue, Dublin 8 on Sunday 9th November 2008.

St. Michael's Cemetery

In April 2009 The Miscarriage Association of Ireland placed it's fourth Memorial Stone, our first outside Dublin, in St. Michael's Cemetery in Athy.

Redford Cemetery

In November 2010 The Miscarriage Association of Ireland placed it's fifth Memorial Stone in Redford Cemetery, Greystones.

BOOKS ON MISCARRIAGE

If it Happens to You - Miscarriage and Stillbirth *Karina Colgan*, A&A Farmer 1994

Talking about Miscarriage
Sarah Murphy, Sheldon Press, 1992

Miscarriage - Woman's Experiences & Needs *Christine Moulder*

Miscarriage
Margaret Leroy, MacDonald Optima, 1988

Miscarriage - Women's Experiences and Needs Pandora, 1990

Miscarriage
Ann Oakley, Ann McPherson & Helen Robers, Fontana, 1990

Coping with a Miscarriage
H. Pizer & C. O'Brien Palinski, Jill Norman, 1980

Miscarriage - Overcoming the Physical and Emotional Trauma
Wendy Jones, Thorsons, 1990

Forever Our Angels
by Hannah Stone

Hidden Loss (Miscariage and Ectopic Pregnancy) *V. Hey, C. Itzin, L. Saunders & M. Speakman*, eds., Women's Press, 1989

Pregnancy
G. Bourne, Pan, 1979, pp 265-281.

Waterbugs & Dragon Flies (explaining death to children)
Doris Stickney, 1993

Miscarriage: What Every Woman Needs to Know
by Lesley Regan

Our Stories of Miscarriage: Healing with Words
by Rachel Faldet

Miscarriage & Stillbirth the Changing Response
by Bruce Pierce (Veritas)

Pink for a Girl
by Isla McGuckin

"We Lost Our Baby: One Couple's Story of Miscarriage and Its Aftermath"
by Siobhán O'Neill - White & David White

BOOKS ON PLANNING FUTURE PREGNANCIES

Getting Pregnant
Robert Winston, 1989

Trying to Have a Baby - Overcoming Infertility and Childlessness
Maggie Jones, Sheldon Press, 1984

Pregnant & Staying Pregnant
Diana Rabb

Eating Well for a Healthy Baby
Sheldon, 1984

The Cervical Stitch
Ros Kane, Miscarriage Association, 1986

Our Bodies Ourselves
Boston Women's Health Collective, Penguin, 1991

A Consumer's Guide to the Maternity Units in Ireland
Irish Association for Improvement in Maternity Services, 1992

BABY WRAPS

The Miscarriage Association of Ireland designed and commissioned a supply of Baby Wraps to be distributed to all maternity hospitals countrywide. This was in response to a request to provide a fitting covering for miscarried babies. This project was undertaken by the Miscarriage Association of Ireland to meet the needs of hospital staff when presenting deceased infants to parents, thus allowing parents the opportunity to hold their baby in a dignified manner.

In appearance the wraps are similar to a baby towel with a hood incorporated in one corner. The material used is a soft, cream fleece, edged with cream satin binding. There is a small cream bow on the front. The wrap can be folded around the baby in whatever is deemed a suitable manner. Two sizes, “Tiny” and “Little” are produced. The adaptable nature of the wraps allows nursing staff to conceal or reveal as much of the baby’s body as they feel is appropriate. The “Tiny Wrap” is suitable for “early miscarriage” and the “Little Wrap” is suitable for “late miscarriage.”

OUR BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE

The Miscarriage Association of Ireland now have a specially commissioned Book of Remembrance in which to commemorate babies lost through miscarriage. To lose your baby through miscarriage can mean you have little or nothing to mark the presence of the baby in your life. A big fear can be that other people will forget your baby because you only have memories and no mementoes. Having this book will change that for recently or long ago bereaved.

A separate entry may be made for each baby. The baby's name, date to remember (date the baby died or date baby was due to be born), and who the baby is remembered by may be entered in the Book together with special thoughts. The special thoughts might be a sentence or a verse of a poem written in memory of the baby.

Those who make entries into the book will be given a Remembrance Certificate showing the page their baby's record is entered on so that in the future other family members will be able to access the information. This means that these precious babies can be included in the family tree.

Those who are not able to complete the Book in person may use the copy of a page of the Book on the next page. When they complete this and return it to us, we will place their entries in the Book and forward them a Remembrance Certificate.

PLEASE REMEMBER TO PRINT YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS ON THE BACK OF THE COPY SO WE CAN SEND ON YOUR REMEMBRANCE CERTIFICATE.

The Book of Remembrance will be on display at any event the Miscarriage Association of Ireland is represented.

Committee of the Miscarriage Association of Ireland

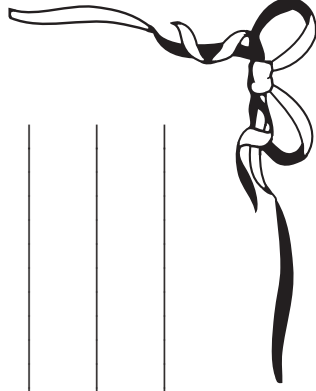
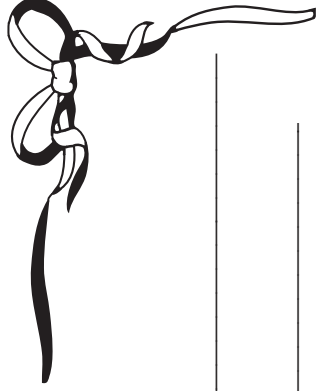
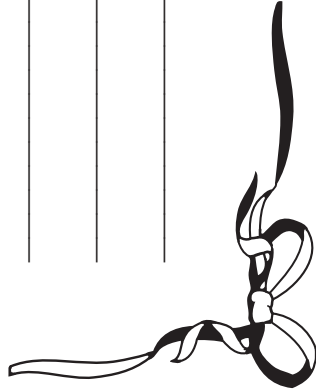


Baby's Name _____

Date/Dates to Remember _____

Remembered by _____

Special Thoughts



Name: _____

Address: _____

Contact Telephone Number: _____

Date: _____



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OF IRELAND

Carmichael Centre, North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7.
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The Miscarriage Association of Ireland is a charitable organisation (*Registered Charity Number CHY9738*) run by people who have all experienced miscarriage. We give our time and services voluntarily and our funds are used for the production and distribution of information. We are always in need of money to enable us to continue this work.

May I ask you to consider becoming a member/renew your annual subscription. Members receive a Newsletter twice a year. If you cannot afford the subscription a contribution would be greatly appreciated

*Thank You
Treasurer*

Membership/Renewal Form

Annual Subscription €15

I/We enclose Cheque/Postal Order (made payable to the Miscarriage Association of Ireland) for €15 as Membership Subscription for the year 20____.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

TELEPHONE _____

EMAIL _____

Would you like future mail to be forwarded by email only? Yes No

New Member Renewal Donation (Please tick appropriate box)