Threatened Miscarriage

A miscarriage, or "spontaneous abortion" in medical terms, is the loss of pregnancy before twenty weeks. More than 80% of miscarriages happen during the first trimester or 12 weeks of pregnancy. Miscarriages that occur after the 20th week of pregnancy are called stillbirths. Most miscarriages cannot be prevented. Some women, however, may have bleeding early in pregnancy without miscarrying and can go on to have a healthy baby.

Causes of Miscarriage

It is often not known why a miscarriage occurs. Some factors that can lead to a miscarriage are:

- **Baby’s Health**
  At least half of all miscarriages are caused by problems with the fetus' (developing baby) chromosomes or genetics. There may be problems with how the embryo attaches to the lining of the uterus, or this may be nature's way of ending a pregnancy in which the fetus was not developing normally and would not have been able to survive.

- **Mother's Health**
  - Chronic diseases, such as high blood pressure or diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease, thyroid problems, or autoimmune disorders, such as lupus, can increase risk for miscarriage.
  - Infections of the female organs (especially sexually transmitted diseases) may cause no signs but may affect the uterus and fetus and end a pregnancy.

More on next page ➔

Learn more about your health care.
Other infections from different viruses or bacteria can also lead to miscarriage, such as Cytomegalovirus (CMV), pneumonia, food-borne illness, German measles or toxoplasmosis, a disease from the bacteria of cat feces.

Genetic conditions, such as hormone abnormalities, or lack of hormone production, problems with the uterus where the baby implants or problems with the cervix.

Shock and trauma. Other reasons may be accidental injury, physical abuse or severe emotional stress.

Age. Women who are 40 years or older have a slightly increased risk for miscarriage.

Lifestyle

 Exposure to smoke, drinking alcohol frequently or the use of illegal drugs, especially cocaine, increases the risk of miscarriage.

 Exposure to occupational or environmental hazards, such as radiation, can increase risk of miscarriage.

 Poor nutrition or too much caffeine can also increase the risk for miscarriage.

Medicines

 Some medicines can harm the mother’s health or her baby’s leading to miscarriage.

Protecting Yourself and Your Baby

Do what you can to protect yourself and your unborn baby:

 Rest as much as possible. Avoid heavy lifting, pushing, pulling, bending or other activities that can put strain on your body. Get help for everyday tasks, such as childcare, housework and yard work. You may need to lay down with your feet above your head.

 Contact your employer and let them know about your health care needs and doctor’s instructions to avoid miscarriage.

 Do not douche, use tampons or have sexual intercourse until your doctor recommends.

 Keep track of the number of sanitary pads you use.
- Keep regular prenatal visits with your doctor.
- Women who have had a threatened miscarriage have found that the support of husbands, families, and friends can be helpful in getting through this stressful time.

**What You Need To Know**

Call your doctor or return to the Emergency Department if:

- Your bleeding increases to the use of more than one sanitary pad an hour for 3 hours in a row, or you have increased cramping.
- You have a gush of fluid from your vagina, but pain or bleeding does not occur.
- You develop a fever of over 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or 38 degrees Celsius.
- You pass a whitish, gray or meaty-like tissue. If this happens, put the tissue in a clean container or plastic bag and bring it with you to the hospital for the doctor to see.

Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.