

## INFORMATION SHEET

# Preparing for pregnancy - Miscarriage

## expert care for women

Planning another pregnancy after a miscarriage may be difficult emotionally for many couples. It is important to recognise your feelings following a miscarriage and seek counseling and support. A subsequent pregnancy can uncover unexpectedly strong feelings about a previous loss and it is important to have professional support available. The timing for planning another pregnancy after a miscarriage is as unique as each couple. Your obstetrician or general practitioner can recommend counselors and appropriate support.

### When can another pregnancy occur after a miscarriage?

It is possible for another pregnancy to occur during the next ovulation cycle. The next cycle may be delayed by a few weeks following a miscarriage. From a physical perspective, it is important not to delay another pregnancy for too long if maternal age and fertility are an issue.

### What is the chance of having another miscarriage?

Miscarriage is very common, occurring in approximately 17 to 20% of pregnancies. Most couples have a successful pregnancy after a miscarriage, however if you experience two or more miscarriages, known as recurrent miscarriage, you should speak to your obstetrician for specialist advice. Less than one percent of women will have recurrent miscarriage. A specialist may be able to investigate and establish if there is any underlying condition which may cause miscarriage.

Maternal age also increases the risk of miscarriage. Women over 40 years of age have a 50% chance of miscarriage. It is recommended women do not delay another pregnancy after a miscarriage in terms of maternal age, as each year increases the risk of miscarriage.

### What conditions could cause recurrent miscarriage?

Some underlying conditions may include a congenital abnormality of the uterus, a blood disorder or an infection of the uterus. Of the less than one percent of women who

experience recurrent miscarriage, only half will have an underlying condition identified.

### Is there anything I can do to prevent a miscarriage?

Unfortunately there is usually nothing you can do to prevent a miscarriage. Many women feel a sense of guilt that somehow they could have prevented a miscarriage and this can be perpetuated by well meaning friends and family who offer scientifically unfounded theories. Some scenarios which we know do not cause miscarriages include stress, grief, hot baths, exercise and a myriad of other everyday activities.

There is evidence that during major influenza epidemics there is a slight increase in the risk of miscarriage, which may be linked to high fevers; however this is an extremely small number of cases and unfortunately it is virtually impossible to eliminate the possibility of contracting the flu. Having a flu vaccination can protect you from some of the more severe strains of flu and is worth considering if you are planning a pregnancy. Speak to your obstetrician for further advice.

Another factor worth considering is avoiding alcohol during the early phase of pregnancy. A study in the United States indicated one glass of sherry per day almost doubled the risk of miscarriage.

### How can I alleviate my anxiety about another pregnancy?

Your obstetrician can provide valuable assurance and specialist advice during your pregnancy. They may recommend more regular appointments and scans during the early phase of pregnancy to provide assurance on the progress of the pregnancy. It may also help to identify milestones in the pregnancy and decreased likelihood of miscarriage as the pregnancy progresses.

A counselor can provide further emotional support and strategies for coping with anxiety during subsequent pregnancies.