

## Pregnancy & Infant Loss

No expectant parent wants to think about a worst case scenario, and fortunately, the majority of pregnant women will never have to. That being said, pregnancy loss – including miscarriage, stillbirth, and post-partum infant death – is **much more common** than many women know.

As with other aspects of your pregnancy, we believe it is best to be informed. Following are some basic statistics and prevention strategies to keep in mind during your pregnancy. As always, do not hesitate to ask your medical provider any questions you may have about pregnancy loss, and always report any symptoms which you may have concerns about.

### Pregnancy Loss Statistics (US)

- Up to **1 in 4** known pregnancies result in miscarriage (defined as spontaneous loss of the pregnancy within the first 20 weeks of gestation)
- Most miscarriages occur within the **first 13 weeks** of pregnancy, though 25% of miscarriages occur after the first trimester
- Stillbirth (the loss of a pregnancy after 20 weeks of gestation) occurs in **1 in 200** pregnancies
- **About 50%** of stillbirths occur at or near full term in otherwise healthy and uncomplicated pregnancies
- **1 in 160** infants die within the first year of life (this includes a **1 in 2000** SIDS risk)
- Pregnancy and infant loss cut across all socio-economic classes, races, religions and maternal age groups. **It can happen to anyone**, and is almost *never* due to anything the mother did or did not do. In many cases, pregnancy/infant loss is *not* preventable.

### What You Can Do

- **Trust your intuition.** Do *not* hesitate to call your care provider if you suspect anything might be wrong or are experiencing any symptoms which you are concerned about.
- **Lead a healthy lifestyle.** Eat right, exercise, do not smoke or drink, manage stress, limit caffeine intake, keep weight within healthy limits, take folic acid supplements, and stay hydrated.
- **Be aware of your baby's movements.** Know your baby's activity patterns (including fetal hiccups), and report any decreases or increases in activity level to your provider right away – do not wait until morning. Consider keeping a kick count.
- **Sleep on your left side** to maximize blood flow.
- **Report any of the following to your provider immediately:** vaginal bleeding or spotting, pain or cramping in your pelvis or lower back, loss of fluid or mucus plug, fever.

### If the Worst Happens

1. **Know that it is *NOT* your fault.** Every mother feels responsible for the well-being of her child, but more than likely, there was nothing you or anyone could have done to prevent what happened.
2. **Take the opportunity to mother your baby.** If you had a late-term loss, strongly consider holding your baby, referring to him/her by name, and taking lots of photos (free photographers/retouching are available). Even though it may seem frightening in the moment, looking back most parents are extremely glad they did this. The birth experience can – and should – still be filled with love, even if your baby does not survive.
3. **Memorialize your baby.** Gather mementos at the hospital, hold a memorial service, fill out the baby book, create a photo scrapbook of your pregnancy, wear a piece of jewelry or plant a tree in remembrance of your baby, etc. Find meaningful ways to incorporate your baby into your life and your family.
4. **Share your story.** Seek out an in-person or online support group or counselor, speak to other women who have lost babies, and consider sending out a birth announcement with your child's story. Pregnancy/infant loss is a universal experience and nothing to be ashamed of. Your child is deserving of your love and memory – do not be afraid to share him or her with the world. You will be surprised how many other women you know have suffered similar losses and survived. You are not alone. It will not be easy, but never doubt that you will survive, too.