

## **Coping with Miscarriage**

Becoming pregnant through IVF results in feelings of much excitement and happiness, but also relief that all the emotional and physical energy that you have invested in IVF has been worth it. It is also common to feel anxious about the pregnancy, as you have been through so much to get to this stage. As a result, miscarriage at any stage of the pregnancy can be devastating. Miscarriage is usually met with feelings such as anger, sadness, guilt, blame and huge disappointment. However people cope with these feelings in different ways, which is fine. The most important thing is to look after yourself and your partner, and keep talking to each other.

### **Miscarriage**

The process of an IVF pregnancy is only different to a naturally conceived pregnancy at the stages of conception and implantation, after that they are the same in every way. Therefore, the risk of losing your baby is the same in both situations. Miscarriage can be a very difficult time for any couple. However, it can be particularly hard for those of you who have conceived through IVF.

You know how difficult it was to become pregnant, hence sometimes see that pregnancy as “your one chance” of having a child.

Miscarriage most commonly occurs during the first three months of a pregnancy, regardless of whether conception was natural or assisted. However, in an IVF pregnancy you are aware that you are pregnant right from the beginning, whereas in a natural conception a couple may not be aware that they are pregnant until their next cycle. Therefore if a miscarriage occurs in the very early stages they may not have even known that they were pregnant, let alone that they lost their baby. However, in IVF you know very early on, so you are not protected by this natural process. The main thing to remember is that you are not at a higher risk of miscarriage because of IVF. Furthermore, in most cases you couldn't have done anything differently to avoid it from happening, so it's not your fault.

### **Finding out that you've lost your baby**

Finding out that you have miscarried is an extremely distressing time, and it is normal for individuals react in different ways. Some people may go through a brief period of distress, whereas others can find it traumatic, and grieve for their child for months or years. However, it is common to respond with denial, numbness or shock. You may also go through a range of emotions including anger, sadness, guilt, blame, and disappointment. You may also ask questions such as: Why me? What have I done wrong? What if things were different? Regardless of your initial response, you may find that you are reminded of your miscarriage at times in the future, which can cause some of those initial feelings to resurface. These are all normal reactions to a loss such as this, as they are all part of the grieving process.

## **Coping with miscarriage**

Grieving the loss of your unborn baby may be normal, but this doesn't mean that it is easy. Everyone copes differently when experience a loss, and it is important to utilise coping strategies that you have found helpful in the past. This being said, this may be the first time you have experienced a loss of this kind, which can be very overwhelming. Whichever the case, a number of coping techniques have been found to be helpful, such as communication, social support, memorials, and enjoyable activities.

## **Communicate**

One of the most important ways of coping is to talk to your partner. You have both experienced an incredible loss, but that doesn't necessarily mean that you will feel or cope with it in the same way. Couples report that this can be a difficult time in a relationship. Therefore it is crucial to tell one another how you are feeling. Talk about what you need from each other, as well as what you have to give. The most important thing is do accept and appreciate each other, and what you are going through.

## **Social Support**

Some people find it helpful to talk through their feelings with family or friends in addition to their partner. This may be particularly true if one partner copes by talking about the miscarriage more than the other. As long as you continue to communicate about your feelings as a couple, it is also okay to talk to other people about what is going on for you.

## **Memorial**

Part of the grieving process is to find a way of holding on to the memory and the meaning of the pregnancy without blocking yourself off from experiencing emotions in other aspects of your life. One way some couples do this is to have some sort of memorial to symbolise your love for your unborn child. This could be anything, from planting a tree, to having a memorial service.

## **Enjoyable activities**

There may be times when you feel miserable and you don't want to get out of bed in the morning, which is okay. It's normal to feel miserable at times, and it is important that you allow yourself to feel those emotions. However, it is also important to continue doing things that are constructive, or make you feel good. So if you stay in bed all morning, make sure you do something enjoyable later that day, whether it is going for a walk, or doing some shopping, or anything else that you enjoy.

Losing a baby can be a very difficult time for a couple regardless of whether the conception was natural or through IVF. However, the emphasis placed on that pregnancy can be greater for couples going through IVF due to the difficult process that you have been through to get there. Therefore it can be an extremely distressing time for a couple, and it is important that you look after yourselves, and each other. This can be done by utilising coping strategies that you have found helpful in the past, as well as those outlined in this article. Furthermore, if you don't feel that you are coping, counsellors are available at Wesley Monash IVF to help you through this difficult time.