

EARLY PREGNANCY LOSS (MISCARRIAGE) TREATMENT: WATCH AND WAIT

WHAT IS AN EARLY PREGNANCY LOSS?

Some pregnancies stop growing in the first 12 weeks. That is an early pregnancy loss.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Many people choose to “watch and wait,” letting their bodies complete a pregnancy loss. Other people choose either to use medication or a procedure to help control the process.

HOW WELL DOES THE “WATCH AND WAIT” METHOD WORK?

- The “watch and wait” method works 70%-80% of the time.
- It works better if you already have had some bleeding.

IS IT SAFE?

Yes, the “watch and wait” option is a safe way to complete a pregnancy loss. The “watch and wait” method does not lower your chance of getting pregnant again.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN?

- If you are already bleeding, this will likely continue with cramping and the passage of tissue and blood clots. Heavy bleeding may last for 3-5 hours. You may see some grey or white tissue. After that you may have light, period-like bleeding for 1-2 weeks. The whole process may take weeks. Bleeding may stop and start. Your clinician might give you the medication that speeds up the process just in case you change your mind.
- If you have not yet started to bleed, you will wait for your body to begin the process. This can take days or weeks. Some people don’t mind waiting, while others want to speed up the process. You can change your mind if you want medication or a procedure.

WHAT CAN I TAKE FOR PAIN?

- **Medicine:** Take ibuprofen (Motrin or Advil), naproxen (Aleve), or acetaminophen (Tylenol) for pain according to the instructions on the package. Take this with food to avoid an upset stomach.
- **Comfort:** A hot pack may help with cramps. You can also drink some hot tea. Rest in a soothing place.

WHAT IF IT TAKES TOO LONG OR DOESN'T WORK?

If you’ve decided on the watch and wait method, you and your provider will decide how many weeks to wait before following up to see if you have passed the pregnancy completely. If you feel it is taking too long, you can return to your clinician at any time for medication or a procedure.

WHEN SHOULD I CALL OR RETURN TO MY CLINICIAN?

- If the bleeding becomes very heavy and soaks through more than 2 maxi pads per hour for 2 hours in a row.
- If you have severe cramps that do not get better with pain medication.
- If you feel dizzy or feel like you may “pass out.”
- If you have foul-smelling discharge, chills, or a fever over 101°F (38.3° C).
- If you have overwhelming feelings of sadness or grief.

If you have any questions or concerns, call your clinician. Let your clinician know if you need help. Your clinician knows this may be a tough time for you and you have received a lot of instructions.

HOW SOON CAN I GET PREGNANT AGAIN?

You can get pregnant soon after the pregnancy loss ends. If you want to try again, take a prenatal vitamin daily. If you are not ready to be pregnant at this time, you can talk to your clinician about birth control options.

FEELINGS AFTER AN EARLY PREGNANCY LOSS

Please understand that nothing you did caused the pregnancy loss. 1 in 4 people experience an early pregnancy loss. We do not fully understand all of the reasons pregnancy losses occur. Pregnancy loss is **NOT** caused by stress, sports, food, or sex.

Sometimes families and friends don’t know what to say to help. If you feel very upset, you should let your clinician know and get the help you need.