

RETURN TO WORK AFTER A MISCARRIAGE

Going back to work following a miscarriage may feel daunting. We share some factors to bear in mind and some practical considerations to support you on your return



Staggeringly, although it's estimated around one in four recognised pregnancies end in miscarriage, it's still one of the issues surrounding pregnancy that's too rarely discussed. It's not so much of a taboo as something that is passed over, often dismissed as a normal hazard of trying for a baby that women and their partners should just move swiftly on from.

Emotional Toll

While some miscarriages are so early that a woman may not even realise, even early pregnancies should not be dismissed because of timing as most are devastating to the people involved, with some late stage miscarriages being hugely traumatic.

Trying to get pregnant over and over and not being successful is a very emotional road. It can impact on emotional health and well-being as well as relationships with loved ones. Whatever the circumstances, many women will feel raw for a long time after and describe an overwhelming sadness, usually some anger and a sense of loneliness.

There is also often a sense that you are being judged and a feeling of failure, which in turn can lead to self-blame, low self-worth and the issue of trying to conceive becoming all consuming.

Responses and reactions to a miscarriage will, of course, vary depending on the person and the stage the miscarriage occurs, but while time does eventually help to start the healing process, it's important to recognise that this can be an extremely traumatic emotional experience.

Factors to Bear in Mind

- You're not alone, there will, most probably, be other women in the office who've experienced the same thing, or if not there are external support groups you can contact
- It's normal to feel drained, emotional and vulnerable, and even to experience anxiety about returning to work
- You need to be kind to yourself and accept there may be bad days when you don't want to get out of bed
- You need to allow time for you (and your partner) to grieve - it can take months to feel on the mend
- You should give yourself space to recover physically and emotionally - consider requesting a shorter work week or reduced hours for a few weeks to help facilitate this

Returning to Work: Practical Considerations

In addition to the emotional and physical toll of a miscarriage, many women will also feel pressure to just pick up and crack on without making a fuss. While the way forward will be as individual as you are, here are some things to think about, that may help ease planning your return into the workplace.

If it's an early miscarriage you may not have told anyone in the office you were pregnant yet and you may not even want your work colleagues to know you are trying for a baby.

What to do then?

Are you supposed to then tell everyone? Tell your manager? Tell your team?

Work out who the most important people are that need to know to support you.

- If you're not comfortable talking to your manager about it, can you get a partner or person close to you to explain what has occurred?

Other questions follow...

- Are you able to take time off as part of your sick leave cover?
- Should you request or seek emotional support or counselling?
- If you do manual work as part of your role, do you need to relinquish this for a while?

If it's a later miscarriage and colleagues did know you were pregnant, in addition to the above, it's advisable to create a plan for your return. Think about:

- Do you want colleagues to be informed before you return so you don't have to break the news over and over again?
- Do you want people to talk to you about it?
- Do you want to request that no one mentions it? Will that then create an uncomfortable situation or a safe space for you to return to some normality in the work area of your life?

These questions all have intensely personal answers - none of which are right or wrong - and all will depend on how you feel in the instance if, as and when this happens.

Let's Not Forget This Affects Partners Too...

If you have suffered a miscarriage, while the expectation may sometimes be that partners just need to provide support, it's worth also considering the above for them. It may be helpful for them to get support in dealing with their own grief, as well as advice on how to support their own and their partner's recovery.