

# Early pregnancy loss

red  
nose

## Reading this brochure probably means you've lost your beautiful bub.

### We are so sorry.

#### This brochure has been designed to help you understand your options and outline some of the decisions you need to make.

The loss of a bub at any stage in pregnancy can be really sad and have an impact on parents. After weeks of dreaming, imagining and planning it is also the loss of those hopes and dreams for the future. To feel sad and empty at this time is understandable.

The loss of a bub before the 20th week of pregnancy is called a miscarriage or early pregnancy loss. Sadly, miscarriage is common. About 1 in 4 pregnancies end with the loss of the bub through miscarriage. The loss of a bub after 20 weeks is called a stillbirth.

You might have questions about your choices and what happens next. Many parents want to know what will happen to their bub, and if this might happen again. Every pregnancy loss is different, and there is no right way to feel about it.

Many women who have had an early pregnancy loss feel guilty and might blame themselves. Most of the time, there is nothing that the mother did to cause this and nothing could have been done to prevent the loss. Because there is still a lot that is unknown about many early pregnancy losses, most parents do not ever find out the cause.

It is normal to experience lots of feelings and reactions when you have an early pregnancy loss.

#### Some of these are:

- Feeling shame
- Feeling lonely
- Feeling numb or empty
- Sadness
- Crying
- Anger
- Confused
- Relief

#### How will I cope with grief and sadness?

We all cope in different ways when we have experienced a loss. Many women talk about feeling confused, sad or angry that their body didn't keep growing bub.

Physically, grief can be an intense experience. Parents may have trouble sleeping, have an upset tummy, not feel hungry or have headaches. Mothers have sometimes said they have a strong physical craving to hold their bub, like their empty arms are aching.

#### Will I be able to see my bub?

If you want to, you can ask your midwife or doctor to see bub – it is your baby. If the loss happened very early in pregnancy, bub is very small, and you might not even know what you are looking at.

If you have cultural obligations for bub you can let the health care team know and they will respect your decisions. If you choose not to see your bub, you can ask hospital staff to take photos of your bub for you to look at later if you want to.

Sometimes when women experience an early pregnancy loss they do not go to hospital. This may be because they live too far away from a health service, or they feel they can manage at home and do not need help from the hospital.

If the loss of bub is later in pregnancy, you can hold, spend time with, and do what you need to honour your bub.

*Remember there is no right or wrong decision. Do what feels right for you.*

#### What will happen to bub?

It's up to you what happens with your bub's body. You can request bub is returned to you so you can follow your own cultural practices. It's important to yarn about this with staff so everybody knows what to expect and so staff know how to support you best.

There are no legal requirements to bury or cremate babies miscarried before the 20th week of pregnancy, it is generally possible for you to do so if you choose. Your hospital should have more information on your options.

#### Do I need to register bub's birth/death?

Some hospitals offer commemorative certificates to acknowledge your bub's life. Red Nose have available 'In Memory' certificates you can request.



# How can I make memories of/with my bub?

Even if you are not able to see or hold your bub, it is possible to create meaningful memories of their life.

## Some suggestions include:

- Collecting mementos of your pregnancy: Some parents create a memory box full of things like ultrasound photos, a photo of bub, an item of clothing you got for bub or hospital tags.
- Make a piece of art or craft to remember and honour the journey you and bub went on together.
- Write your thoughts in a journal or write a poem or letter to your bub.
- We acknowledge for some families, it is not appropriate to name bub. For some families, naming bub or giving bub a nickname feels the right thing to do. This is your choice to make.

We know this is a hard time for you and your family. It can be very hard to talk to people about what has happened and to find people who understand the grief you are feeling.

Sometimes people expect that we can move on and forget, but we know that many parents and families never forget their bub and think about them often.

Parents might grieve the loss of their bub differently. This can make it even harder to find help and it can make things tricky between you.

## How we can help

Red Nose has different services to help you. We know that people may need different types of help. We hope that one of these options might help you, but if you choose one and it is not right for you, you can always try another.

- Yarning with someone who has also had a bub pass away. They will help you know you are not alone and listen to your story.
- Talking to a professional counsellor. Counsellors work with couples, children or with a person by themselves. The counsellors have worked with other First Nations families who have had a bub pass away and they are skilled at helping people who have faced this. Interpreters can be arranged if needed.
- Attend a peer support group with other families who have also had a bub pass away. These groups are run by trained peer supporters. There are also men/father support groups that are facilitated by male peer supporters.

You can call up the service intake number and they can also help you decide what service might be best for you.

**You can call 1300 308 307 or email [intake@rednose.org.au](mailto:intake@rednose.org.au) to speak to a Red Nose peer supporter who can help you decide what service might be best for you.**



Red Nose acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands in which we work, live and visit.

Red Nose 24/7 Support Line  
**1300 308 307**  
[rednosegriefandloss.org.au](mailto:rednosegriefandloss.org.au)  
[intake@rednose.org.au](mailto:intake@rednose.org.au)

For general enquiries call **1300 998 698**

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