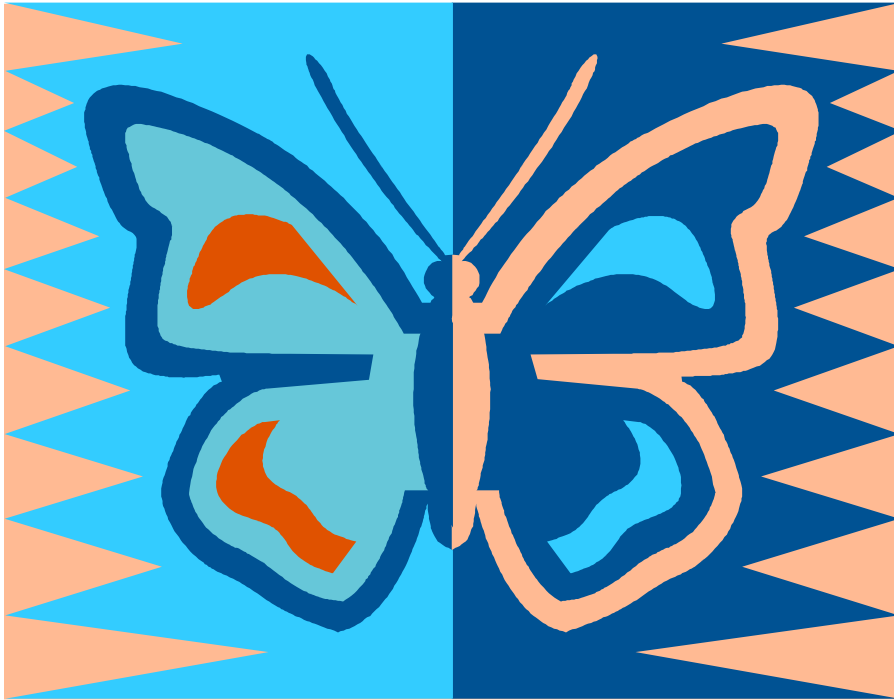


*You're  
Not  
Alone*



*A Helpful Booklet in Your Time of Loss*



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## *Dealing with Pregnancy Loss*



### **Pregnancy loss is painful**

This is a difficult time for women, their partners, and/or families. It is a time when you may need comfort and emotional support.

Some women and their families feel confused, shocked, angry, guilty, sad, and in despair. These feelings are normal.

Sometimes, these feelings can be so overwhelming that you find it difficult to cope with the ordinary demands of daily living. Women often say they feel overwhelmed, become forgetful, and are preoccupied with thoughts of the baby. Just know that this process takes time.

### **Allow yourself to experience the pain of your loss**

People experience grief both physically and emotionally. Each person's grief experience is different. There is no right or wrong way to feel. Even within cultural groups, the experience of grief is different from person to person.

Crying might help. Your feelings are real and they will not go away if you try to shut them out. You may feel some relief if you pay attention to your feelings and allow yourself time and space to express them. Healing can begin when you acknowledge your broken heart.

If you have any specific religious, cultural, or spiritual rituals, let your healthcare providers know what they are (for example, tell your doctor, midwife, social worker, public health nurse).

### **Be patient with yourself**

It is normal to feel confused and unsure of yourself for many days, weeks, and months after the loss of your baby. You need care and understanding from everybody around you. This is also a time to care for yourself.

A crisis such as the loss of a baby may bring you, your partner, and your family closer together. However, this may not necessarily happen. You may all be grieving differently. This is normal. It might help if everyone sits together and takes turns to talk about their feelings. Try asking each other "How are you feeling?"

## **Get support from those around you**

Pregnancy loss is often a private event in a woman's life. Support from those around you may or may not be obvious. To get support, it might help to talk about your feelings with trusted friends and family members. Support from others can be very helpful as you cope with your loss.

If you don't feel those around you can give you the support you need, you may wish to find someone less affected by your loss. You could contact a support group, a professional counsellor, your family doctor or midwife, or a public health nurse.

While in hospital, you can ask to speak with the social worker. The social worker might be available to help you process the grieving experience, offer you practical support, and connect you with someone who can help.

## **Create memories**

You may find healing to create lasting memories with your beloved baby. This can include naming your baby, seeing and holding your baby after giving birth, having a memorial service, and collecting mementos.

With help from hospital staff, some families collect mementos of their baby such as a lock of the baby's hair, hand and foot prints, photographs, the crib card, and the hospital bracelet.

## **Looking to the future**

In the future, you might want to get pregnant again. Remember each pregnancy is different.

Should you become pregnant, you may find old worries coming to the surface, even though you thought they had disappeared. You may have unresolved feelings and fears of losing the pregnancy again. This is normal.

Future pregnancies may be emotionally difficult. If you allow yourself time to grieve your loss now, you might find your worries easier to cope with during your next pregnancy.

If you have any questions, contact your healthcare provider.



## *After The Loss* *Caring for your body*



Your body will go through a number of changes. These are normal. You can return to your normal daily activities as you feel up to it.

### **Bleeding**

You will have some bleeding. You can expect to have a light to moderate flow for at least 3 to 4 days, but could continue for as long as 2 weeks. It is not unusual for bleeding to stop and start again over this period.

The flow is usually not heavier than a normal period. Some women bleed more heavily for a day or so. Every woman is different. If you are concerned at all, contact your family doctor.

### **Preventing Infection**

The cervix (opening of the uterus) remains relaxed and open for several days after pregnancy loss. During this time, bacteria can enter your uterus and cause an infection.

To help prevent infection, do the following:

- Use sanitary pads rather than tampons while you are bleeding.
- For the first week, take showers instead bathing, and do not go swimming.
- Do not have sexual intercourse until after the bleeding has stopped.
- Do not douche or insert anything into your vagina until you have checked with your family doctor.

#### **When to get help**

Contact your family doctor if you notice any of the following:

- ▶ You have bleeding for more than 2 weeks.
- ▶ You are bleeding heavier than a 'normal period' for more than 24 hours
- ▶ You have foul-smelling, thick fluid coming from your vagina.
- ▶ You have really bad belly (abdominal) pain.
- ▶ You have chills or a fever over 38.5°C (101.3F).

## **Breast Changes**

A few days after birth, your breasts will produce milk. If your breasts feel warm, hard, swollen, or tender, you are experiencing breast fullness. To learn how manage this, review the pamphlet '*Managing Breast Fullness After the Loss of Your Baby*'. Ask a hospital or public health nurse for a copy. If you have any questions or concerns about breast changes, talk to your doctor or public health nurse.

You might choose to donate your breast milk. BC Women's Milk Bank provides pasteurized donor milk to children in need. Most babies who get this milk are sick and their mothers are not able to breastfeed or produce enough breast milk to feed their babies. To learn more, ask a hospital or public health nurse for the pamphlet '*Donor Human Milk*' and talk to your doctor. You can also contact the Milk Bank directly (Phone: 604-875-3743 or Web: [bcwomensmilkbank.ca](http://bcwomensmilkbank.ca))

## **Menstruation**

You should have a menstrual period in 4 to 6 weeks. By then, your body will have readjusted to its non-pregnant state.

If your period does not resume as expected, arrange to see your family doctor. Remember, every woman's menstrual cycle is different. What is normal for one person may be abnormal for another. If you are concerned at all, get it checked.

## **Birth Control**

It is possible to become pregnant right after the pregnancy loss, even before your regular menstrual cycle resumes. It might be best to wait a few months before beginning another pregnancy. Talk to your doctor about what is best for you.

To keep from getting pregnant, always use some type of birth control every time you have sexual intercourse (until your doctor says it is okay and you wish to begin another pregnancy). Talk to your doctor about what type of birth control is best for you.

## **Follow-up**

Your family doctor or specialist might want to see you in the office after your pregnancy loss. Talk to your doctor about this.



## *You Are Absolutely Normal*



There are number of 'normal' reactions to loss and they appear in ways you might not expect. These can be common reactions to a crisis. You may have experienced one, a few, many, or none of these reactions.

### **Changes in your sleep**

- sleeping too much
- disturbed sleep
- not sleeping at all

### **Changes in appetite**

- not feeling hungry
- eating for no reason

### **Changes in your emotions**

- being lonely or depressed
- being crabby/irritable
- crying for no apparent reason
- feeling panicked over little things
- being angry for being left alone
- being angry with the 'health care system' for not doing enough
- being angry with yourself for not taking more heroic steps
- becoming emotional from triggers/reminders of the loss

### **Changes in your behaviour**

- finding it difficult to make decisions or hard to trust the decisions you do make
- buying things you did not need
- considering selling everything and moving
- going to the store every day

### **Changes in your thinking**

- feeling like you are losing control
- finding yourself unable to concentrate on written material
- being unable to remember what you just read
- finding yourself obsessed with thoughts of your baby
- being forgetful, confused, unusually absent-minded
- forgetting why you went somewhere
- feeling guilty about things you have, or have not, done

### **Changes in your feelings towards others**

- feeling no one understands what you are going through
- calling friends and talking for a long time or wanting to hang up after only a brief conversation
- feeling people should call more often or not call you at all
- feeling people should involve you in activities more often or leave you alone
- avoiding social functions you usually enjoyed

### **Changes in your body**

- headaches
- upset stomach
- feeling weak and exhausted
- feeling more aches and pains

Coping with serious illness and loss is a very complex experience. Everyone experiences this differently. There is no timeline when you will feel 'normal' again.



## *Taking Care of Yourself*



### **Give yourself permission, time, and space to grieve.**

- Acknowledge your broken heart.
- Allow yourself to cry if you are able. It may provide some comfort and relief of built up emotions.
- Reflect on your imagined guilt and “if only”.
- Feel free to protest the ‘why’ of death.
- Try not to escape into loneliness.
- Laughter does not mean you are being disrespectful to your loved one’s memory.

### **Listen to yourself.**

- Use your own awareness of your level of grief and healing.
- Do not measure yourself by how others grieve and heal. It is different for everyone.
- Understand and accept your limitations.
- Respect the way your partner and/or your family grieves. Respect the time it takes for them to heal.

### **Talk to others.**

- Tell those around you what you need from them: practical help, emotional support, sharing of time.
- It might be helpful to talk about your experience and your child to people who you think will understand.
- Talking with others can be a way to keep your child’s memory alive.
- Accept the support people around you with all their imperfections and occasional unwanted advice.
- Recognize that seeking professional counselling and/or attending a pregnancy loss support group does not mean you are weak or inadequate.

### **Take part in meaningful activities with those special to you.**

- Try activities that give you some measure of comfort.
- Suggestions: religion, philosophy, poetry, music, art, gardening, exercise, walks, spirituality, meditation, reading, volunteer work.
- One or more of these might help relieve your grief and help you make meaning of your experience.





## *Making It Through The first year and beyond*



Your life will never be the same, as you are changed by this intense experience. However, it is possible to work through it and find a 'new way' to be 'normal'.

### **Do not be afraid of your feelings – Do not run away from them**

You will experience many unfamiliar feelings during the first year of grief. Let yourself express them.

At any time, you might experience periods of crying, intense pain, isolation, exhaustion, panic, fear, distorted reality, depression, anxiety, loneliness, emptiness, anger and/or guilt. You are not going crazy. Many women who have these experiences worry about this. It is normal.

Grief is a process. It is hard work, but the only way to deal with it is to go through it. Learn to flow with your feelings of grief. Even though these feelings might be painful, they are not permanent. Your sense of reality and your concentration will come back. You will function again, just as well as you did before, perhaps even better.

### **Share your feelings with others**

Talking about your feelings can be an important coping tool. Initially, you might find yourself feeling the need to tell the story of your child's death over and over again. Telling the story sometimes helps. You might feel some relief each time the story is told.

### **Find a creative outlet**

It can be very helpful to direct your energies to something physical, such as needlework, painting, building a patio, or doing some other project. Some people say that doing activities help to relieve some of their feelings of grief. They say it gives them a sense of control when they finish the activity or project and this helps reduce their feelings of powerlessness.

At some point, you might want to read about grief. This can give you information and help you understand your emotions.

Try keeping a journal of your thoughts and feelings. It can also be a good outlet.

### **Make use of support groups**

As time goes on, you might want to share your feelings with people who have had a similar experience. There can be an instant bond among people who have lost a child. People who are newly bereaved, hurt, and confused often find support groups very helpful.

### **Do not try to live up to other people's expectations**

Many people might tell you how you 'should' grieve. Remember, there is only one 'should' in grieving and that is you 'should' go with your own feelings and timetable. Learn to deal with things as you are able. Don't allow yourself to be pushed to do things before you are ready. You will know when something is right for you.

### **Do not take what people say too seriously**

You will hear all kinds of comments while you are in grief. For example, "Hold your chin up," "Be grateful you have each other," or "You can try again." Sometimes these comments hurt; sometimes they may make you angry. Most people mean well and are not intending to hurt you. They just don't know what to say or they might not be comfortable with the subject themselves.

### **Try not to use substances to help cope**

The painful experience of grief can be difficult to deal with. Drinking alcohol or taking medications as a way to cope actually only delays the grieving process.

If you think you are drinking too much or taking too much medication, reach out to people you trust and talk to your doctor. Seek out a professional counsellor to help you through this difficult time.

If you think your doctor is giving you too many prescriptions for medication, get a second opinion from another doctor.



## Community Resources



### Public Health Nurse

Your Public Health Nurse can offer support and resources to help you and your family. Call the Health Unit Office nearest to you to speak with a Public Health Nurse.

Health Unit hours: 8:30<sub>AM</sub> to 4:30<sub>PM</sub>  
Monday to Friday

Public Health Unit	Phone	Weekend/Stat	Address
Abbotsford	604-864-3400	604-864-3418	104 - 34194 Marshall Road, Abbotsford
Agassiz	604-793-7160	1-866-320-7582	7243 Pioneer Avenue, Agassiz
Burnaby	604-918-7605	604-918-7601	300 - 4946 Canada Way, Burnaby
Chilliwack	604-702-4900	604-702-4903	45470 Menholm Road, Chilliwack
Cloverdale	604-575-5100	604-575-5101	205 - 17700 56 <sup>th</sup> Avenue, Surrey
Delta North	604-507-5400	604-507-5462	11245 84 <sup>th</sup> Avenue, Delta
Delta South	604-952-3550	604-507-5462	4470 Clarence Taylor Crescent, Delta
Guildford	604-587-4750	604-587-4761	100 - 10233 153 <sup>rd</sup> Street, Surrey
Hope	604-860-7630	1-866-320-7582	444 Park Street, Hope
Langley	604-539-2900	604-613-2872	20389 Fraser Highway, Langley
Maple Ridge	604-476-7000	604-897-4892	400 – 22470 Dewdney Trunk Rd, Maple Ridge
Mission	604-814-5500	604-217-1205	7298 Hurd Street, Mission
Newton	604-592-2000	604-592-2049	200 - 7337 137 <sup>th</sup> Street, Surrey
New Westminister	604-777-6740	604-527-4806	218 - 610 6 <sup>th</sup> Street, New Westminister
North Surrey	604-587-7900	604-587-7908	220 - 10362 King George Boulevard, Surrey
Tri-Cities	604-949-7200	604-949-7220	200 - 205 Newport Drive, Port Moody
White Rock/ South Surrey	604-542-4000	604-542-4073	15476 Vine Avenue, White Rock

## Professional & Lay Counselling

<b>BC Association Of Clinical Counsellors</b>		1-800-909-6303 <a href="http://www.bc-counsellors.org">www.bc-counsellors.org</a>
<b>BC Bereavement Helpline</b>	Lower Mainland	604-738-9950
Information on community services	Rest of BC	1-877-779-2223
<b>Children's Bereavement</b>		604-584-7006
Surrey Hospice Society For children between ages 5-12 years		
<b>Counselling BC</b>		<a href="http://counsellingbc.com">counsellingbc.com</a>
Directory of counsellors in BC		
<b>Employee and Family Assistance Programs</b>	Contact your employer	
<b>Fraser Health Crisis Line</b>		604-951-8855 (24 hours/day)
Options Community Services		
<b>Hospice Society</b>	Abbotsford	604-852-2456
Individual and possible group counselling	Burnaby	604-520-5087
	Chilliwack	604-795-4660
	Delta	604-948-0660
	Langley	604-530-1115
	Mission	604-826-2235
	Surrey	604-584-7006
	White Rock/South Surrey	604-531-7484
<b>Langley Community Services</b>		604-534-7921
Langley residents only		
<b>Living Through Loss Counselling Society</b>	Vancouver	604-873-5013 <a href="http://livingthroughloss.ca">livingthroughloss.ca</a>
Individual & group counselling Sliding scale fees considered		
<b>Multiple Births Of Canada</b>		1-866-228-8824 <a href="http://multiplebirthscanada.org">multiplebirthscanada.org</a>
Peer support and resource counselling.	email: <a href="mailto:office@multiplebirthscanada.org">office@multiplebirthscanada.org</a>	
<b>Reproductive Mental Health Services</b>	Vancouver	604-875-2025
No fee.	Surrey	
Need to be referred by your healthcare provider.	New Westminister	<a href="http://www.reproductivementalhealth.ca">www.reproductivementalhealth.ca</a>
<b>Wishing Wells Counselling Service</b>	Vancouver	604-568-6556 <a href="http://www.wishingwellscounselling.com">www.wishingwellscounselling.com</a>
Sliding scale fees considered.		

## Support Groups

**Compassionate Friends of Canada**  
Offered at variety of locations

1-866-823-0141  
[www.tcfcanada.net](http://www.tcfcanada.net)

**Empty Cradle**  
2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of every month  
In New Westminster

604-525-4347  
email [emptycradle@telus.net](mailto:emptycradle@telus.net)

**Miss Foundation**  
International online support group

[missfoundation.org](http://missfoundation.org)

**Parent and Sibling Grief Support Group**  
Canuck Place, Vancouver  
For parents and siblings who have  
experienced loss of a child

604-742-3473  
email [info@canuckplace.org](mailto:info@canuckplace.org)

**Perinatal Loss Support Group**  
Abbotsford Hospice

604-852-2456  
email [info@abbotsfordhospice.org](mailto:info@abbotsfordhospice.org)

**Pregnancy Loss Support Group**  
BC Women's Hospital, Vancouver  
Alternating Wednesdays  
4:00PM to 6:00PM

604-875-3788

## Websites

**British Columbia Bereavement Helpline**

[www.bcbh.ca](http://www.bcbh.ca)

**BC Women's Hospital & Health Centre**  
> Health Info > Pregnancy Loss

[www.bcwomens.ca](http://www.bcwomens.ca)

**Grief Watch**

[griefwatch.com](http://griefwatch.com)

**Miss Foundation**

[missfoundation.org](http://missfoundation.org)

**Multiple Births Canada**  
> Parents of Multiples > Looking for  
Support > Loss Support Network

[multiplebirthscanada.org](http://multiplebirthscanada.org)

**SANDS (United Kingdom)**  
Stillbirth & Neonatal Death Charity

[www.sands.org.uk](http://www.sands.org.uk)

**Still Life Canada**

[still-lifecanada.ca](http://still-lifecanada.ca)

## **Books for Adults**

**A Grandparent's Sorrow** (Pat Schwiebert, Grief Watch, Portland, Oregon, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed., 2012)

**A Silent Sorrow: Pregnancy Loss – Guidance and Support for You and Your Family** (Ingrid Kohn & Perry-Lynn Moffit, Routledge, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., 2000)

**Empty Cradle, Broken Heart** (Deborah L. Davis, Fulcrum Publishing, 1996)

**Ended Beginnings: Healing Childbearing Losses** (Claudia Panuthos & Catherine Romero, Warner Books Inc., 1992)

**Healing Your Grieving Heart After Stillbirth: 100 Practical Ideas for Parents and Families** (Alan D. Wolfelt & Raelynn Maloney, Companion Press, 2013)

**Help, Comfort and Hope after Losing Your Baby in Pregnancy or the First Year** (Hannah T. Lothrop, Da Capo Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., 2004)

**Into the Cave: When Men Grieve** (Dr. Ronald G. Petrie, One to Another, Inc., 2001)

**Strong and Tender – A Guide for the Father Whose Baby has Died** (Pat Schwiebert, Grief Watch, Griefwatch, Portland, Oregon, 2013)

**Surviving Miscarriage – You Are Not Alone** (Stacy McLaughlin, Luniverse Inc., 2005)

**When Hello Means Goodbye: A Guide for Parents Whose Child Dies Before Birth, At Birth, or Shortly After Birth** (Pat Schwiebert & Paul Kirk, Grief Watch, Portland, Oregon, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed., 2010)

**When Your Child Dies: Tools for Mending Parents' Broken Hearts** (Avril Nagel & Randie Clark, New Horizon Press, 2012)

**You Can Help Someone Who's Grieving: A How-To Healing Handbook** (Victoria Frigo, Diane Fisher & Mary Lou Cook, Luniverse, 2000)

## Books for Children

**Helping Children Cope With The Loss of A Loved One: A Guide For Grownups** (William C. Kroen, Free Spirit Publishing Inc., 1996)

**How Do We Tell The Children? A Step-By-Step Guide for Helping Children and Teens Cope When Someone Dies** (Daniel Schaefer & Christine Lyons, Newmarket Press, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed., 2010)

**The Fall of Freddie the Leaf: A Story of Life For All Ages** (Leo Buscaglia, Slack Incorporated, 2006)

**We Were Gonna Have a Baby, But We Had An Angel Instead** (Pat Schwiebert, Grief Watch, 2003)

## Employment Insurance Sickness Benefits

If you were working and cannot currently work because of the pregnancy loss, you might be able to get temporary financial help from the Employment Insurance program.

If your pregnancy gestation was under 20 weeks, you might be eligible to 'Medical Employment Insurance' (Medical EI) payments.

If your pregnancy gestation was 20 weeks and over, you might be eligible to 'Maternity Employment Insurance' (Maternity EI) payments.

For more information, you can:

- Visit a Service Canada Centre.
- Search for [Maternity and Parental Benefits](#) on the Service Canada web site.
- Review the [Canada Labour Code – Maternity Leave 808-1-IPG-017 online](#) (www.canada.ca)
- Call Employment Insurance Telephone Information Service (1-800-206-7218).



*There is no footprint so small  
that it does not leave  
an imprint on this world*



[www.fraserhealth.ca](http://www.fraserhealth.ca)

This information does not replace the advice given to you by your healthcare provider.

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