



TOP 5

reasons for miscarriage

Involuntary termination of pregnancy can be disturbing and depressing, and have multiple medical reasons. **Arundhati Nath** speaks to experts to find out what causes a miscarriage

A BABY brings joy and cheer to a mother's life. All those tiring visits to the gynaecologist, the anxiety and mood swings, even the pain of labour seems to vanish in the wink of an eye on the mere sight of one's newborn. Unfortunately, some pregnancies end even before a woman realises that she has conceived. Pregnancies which automatically terminate during the first three months of pregnancy are more common, and are called early miscarriages. Let us look at the top five reasons for miscarriage to understand them better:

CHROMOSOMAL ABNORMALITIES: A large number of miscarriages in early pregnancy are caused by abnormalities in chromosomes. Dr Anita K Mohan, consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist at Fortis Hospital, Bengaluru, says, "Nature decides to stop the growth of any pregnancy that has abnormal chromosomes. Most common causes are damaged egg cell, sperm or the zygote."

CERTAIN UNCONTROLLED ILLNESSES: Diabetic women must have a good blood sugar control before

pregnancy. Uncontrolled diabetes can lead to a miscarriage. "During pregnancy, the sugars are bound to rise due to the pregnancy hormones, and so, continuous monitoring and control of blood sugar is mandatory. Insulin is safe to use in pregnancy," says Dr Mohan. Folic acid must be taken in the pre-conception period and during the first 12 weeks to prevent neural tube defect in the baby. Untreated or poorly controlled thyroid problems could also lead to miscarriages or infertility problems.

PCOS: This acronym stands for Polycystic Ovary Syndrome. Women have both male and female hormones. According to the American Pregnancy Association, women who have PCOS have higher levels of male hormones and experience irregular or absent menstrual cycles and small-fluid-filled cysts on their ovaries. Your gynaecologist will be able to suggest suitable treatment for this disorder, though maintaining a healthy weight and lifestyle are essential.

LIFESTYLE: It is natural that a mother's lifestyle, habits and surroundings have a

bearing on the baby growing inside her. A healthy lifestyle can also help in a healthy pregnancy. Avoid taking medication without your doctor's instructions. "Say no to alcohol and smoking, as it may lead to abnormalities in the baby, miscarriage or even stillbirth," advises Dr Chetna Jain, senior consultant, Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Columbia Asia Hospital, Gurgaon. Moreover, certain medicines for the treatment of epilepsy, SLE, acne, antidepressant medications can lead to major defects in the baby and can lead to miscarriages.

MYTHS & FACTS

Myth: Exercise is harmful

Fact: Only vigorous exercise should be avoided

Myth: Sex can cause a miscarriage

Fact: Sex usually does not cause miscarriage

Myth: If you miscarried once, you'll miscarry again

Fact: You've almost an equal chance of a miscarriage even if you did not miscarry before.

CERTAIN PHYSICAL

COMPLICATIONS: An abnormally-shaped uterus or incompetent cervix could lead to a miscarriage. In these cases, the embryo cannot get implanted properly. If recurrent miscarriages occur, a doctor might correct the condition through surgery. A few other possible reasons for miscarriage could be: immunological disorders, bacterial infections in the reproductive tracts, exposure to X-ray radiations, severe kidney or heart disease, hormonal problems, malnutrition and being underweight or overweight.

WHAT PRECAUTIONS CAN YOU TAKE?

Most early miscarriages are caused due to chromosomal abnormalities which cannot be prevented. It can be treated only after a miscarriage or recurrent miscarriages have actually occurred. There can be a 15 to 20 per cent chance

WARNING SIGNS

Consult your doctor if you observe

- ▶ Vaginal bleeding
- ▶ Pain
- ▶ Vaginal discharge
- ▶ Sudden decrease in baby's activity
- ▶ Decrease in pregnancy symptoms

of a miscarriage in most women, though the rate increases with the woman's increasing age. However, as an expecting mother, you can take some simple precautions to avoid a miscarriage.

- Indulge in some regular, moderate exercise during pregnancy. "Excessive, vigorous exercise may lead to pregnancy loss," Dr Mohan says.
- Avoiding junk food ensures a healthy weight in the mother and helps the baby in growing well.
- Take folic acid capsules regularly as

per your doctor's advice.

- Do not take part in sports or other activities which could lead to an injury in the abdominal area.
- Do not take any medicines without your doctor's permission
- Avoid smoky areas and harmful radiations like X-Rays
- If you are a diabetic or have hormonal problems, make sure to take extra care of yourself.
- Trying to have a baby later than the usual age could be risky.
- Be cheerful and avoid stress.

While every factor affecting a miscarriage is not in our hands, medical advancements have made it possible to treat most cases. The loss of a child could be traumatic, but a mother must never blame herself for a miscarriage. If a woman miscarried for the first time, there's a good chance that she'll bear a healthy baby again. ■



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