



# A guide to...

## Recurrent miscarriage

### *Patient Information*

#### How to contact us

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If you need this leaflet in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01923 217 198** or email [westherts.pals@nhs.net](mailto:westherts.pals@nhs.net)



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## **Recurrent Miscarriage**

We are sorry that you have had another miscarriage and we understand how distressing this can be. This leaflet explains why this might have happened, what tests we can offer you, and what this means for the future.

### **What is meant by recurrent miscarriage?**

A miscarriage is the loss of a pregnancy before 24 weeks. A miscarriage occurs in at least one in five of all pregnancies, but when this happens three times in a row, this is called “recurrent miscarriage”.

### **How common is it?**

It occurs in around 1 in 100 women.

### **Why is it happening to me?**

We may not be able to find out why it keeps happening to you. Often despite detailed tests the reasons for recurrent miscarriage cannot be found. There are a number of things which may play a part in recurrent miscarriage, and it is a complicated problem and still more research is needed. We know that the older you are, the greater the risk of having a miscarriage.

### **Will I be able to have a successful pregnancy in the future?**

If you and your partner feel able to keep trying, there is a good chance of a successful birth in the future – up to three out of every four women who have had three miscarriages in a row will have a successful pregnancy.

### **What can I do to prevent it happening again?**

Once you've had the tests detailed below, appropriate treatments can be recommended if an abnormality is found. If no abnormality is found, then general advice would be to take folic acid (400 mcg) at least three months before conceiving and for the first 12 weeks of a pregnancy. Folic acid can be bought in chemists and supermarkets and there is no harm taking this long term if it takes a while to get pregnant. Avoiding smoking and alcohol is also advised whilst trying to get pregnant and during a pregnancy. Women who have supportive care from the beginning of a pregnancy have a better chance of a successful birth.

### **What tests can be done?**

There are a lot of tests offered for women with recurrent miscarriage. We offer tests that are proven to be beneficial in research trials, rather than lots of tests that are still experimental.

- **Chromosomal test of the pregnancy tissue**

If you have a history of recurrent miscarriage and have another miscarriage, you will be offered genetic testing of that pregnancy tissue. It may not be possible to always get a result, but if we do get a result, it may give us more information that can help you in the future.

- **Chromosomal tests on you and your partner**

A sample of blood can be taken from you and your partner and sent off to the lab, if the chromosomal tests performed on the pregnancy tissue is void (i.e. no results obtained). For around three to five percent of couples who have a history of recurrent miscarriages, either

the woman or their partner will have an abnormality in one of their chromosomes (the genetic structures within our cells that contain our DNA and the features we inherit from our parents). Although such abnormalities may cause no problem for you or your partner, they may sometimes cause problems if passed onto your baby. If an abnormality is found, you will be given the chance to see a specialist who will be able to tell you what your chances are for a successful pregnancy in the future and explain your choices.

### **Blood tests for antibodies in you**

A blood test can be done to look for certain antibodies (anticardiolipin antibodies and lupus anticoagulant). Around 15 in every 100 women who have recurrent miscarriages will have these antibodies. If you are found to have these antibodies, treatment with low dose Aspirin and sometimes heparin injections (blood thinning drugs) in the early part of a pregnancy can improve the chance of a successful pregnancy.

### **Womb structure**

It is not clear how far irregularities in the structure of your womb can affect the risk of miscarriage. You will be offered an internal ultrasound scan when you are not pregnant to check for and assess any abnormalities in the structure of the womb. If any irregularities are found, possible treatments can be discussed.

For women who have had three or more miscarriages in a row (consecutive), please see your GP about referral to a recurrent miscarriage clinic.

### **Further information**

If you have non-urgent questions, please contact the Early Pregnancy Unit at Watford General Hospital during working hours  
Tel: 01923 217831

If you require **urgent** assistance, please contact the Gynaecology Day Assessment Unit at Watford General Hospital **during working hours**  
Tel: 01923 217344

You can get more information and support from The Miscarriage Association  
Tel: 01924 200 799

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

Women's Health  
Tel: 08451 255254

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

The Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists

Patient information leaflet - Couples with recurrent miscarriage [www.rcog.org.uk](http://www.rcog.org.uk)