

Pregnancy after Loss

Losing a child is one of the worst tragedies a couple can go through. The consequences of the loss are immense and have a ripple effect on many aspects of a couple's future. Initially the concept of having another child might feel like the furthest plan in their life. Alternatively for many families it can become a real focus of their future. Yearning for the loss they have experienced can lead them to desiring nothing more than becoming a Mother or Father to a live baby.

It is important to remember there is no right or wrong decision and every couple is very different in what they decide.

Claire Nicogossian ('What to expect when you're pregnant with a rainbow baby', www.mother.ly, accessed 14/9/2020) highlights the importance of allowing yourself some time to process the loss you have experienced can be beneficial for mental and physical wellbeing. Grief is experienced differently by every person and allowing your body the honour of feeling and being in that grief will aid in providing a positive grief experience for the future. It is also recognised that pregnancy after loss comes with great angst and fear; therefore it is imperative to have the right help and resources to help make this a positive experience. From the time you take the pregnancy test there will be joy mixed with worry, the excitement may quickly turn to the "what if's" you have been hurt by in the past. This is normal, however navigating the dark place of worry and fear does not have to be lived alone. Other normal emotions and thoughts around finding out you are pregnant again are;

- Apprehension to get attached to the pregnancy
- A delay in spreading the news of the pregnancy
- Reliving the past experience of loss and the possibility of what if it happens again
- Relationship changes, apprehension from your partner to be too attached to the pregnancy
- Expecting the worst and hoping for the best
- Guilt that you are moving on with another pregnancy

It is not always a negative experience from the start, however, at some stage through the pregnancy it is common for women to become fearful or be triggered by a date or milestone. Often subsequent pregnancies can feel like they are taking a life time to progress, every day feels like a week for some women. Throughout these weeks it is important to have support that might not be family and friends with outlets for when you are finding times challenging, seeking a supportive GP, obstetrician, counsellor or psychologist to make plans to keep the pregnancy as "safe" as possible. At Mater Mothers we are able to provide a Pregnancy after Loss Clinic (PALC); this allows parents to have longer consults with the midwife, a consistent midwife who knows your history, visits with a consultant, and a variable schedule depending on the needs of the woman.

Women who have previously had a loss might find appointments related to their subsequent pregnancy very difficult, this can be due to the possibility of the appointment not going as planned and hoped for. Many times mothers have verbalised that they proceed into appointments with so much anxiety and worry they expect the worst news and are relieved when they find out their baby is appearing healthy and well. This can be a very normal coping mechanism and often unless you have experienced a loss can be hard to comprehend. You may need to find an antenatal care provider that makes you feel comfortable and supported throughout your journey.

Rachel Lewis (2016, '6 things you do differently in pregnancy after loss' <http://stillstandingmag.com>, accessed 14/9/2020) addressed the importance of speaking about your worries and apprehensions to your doctor or midwife will be very helpful; sharing your feelings and concerns with your partner is one of the first lines of support for the pregnancy. Subsequent pregnancies can feel like you are climbing a mountain every day to achieve the Rainbow Baby you so desire, it's okay to admit it is hard, reaching out for help and resources will honour you the best way possible.

Contacts to help you in subsequent pregnancies include;

- Mater Mother's Hospital, Bereavement Team/Pregnancy After Loss Clinic 07 3163 6026
- Pregnancy Birth and Baby Support Line 1800 882 436
- Health Direct 1800 022 222
- PANDA 1300 726 306
- Lifeline 13 11 14
- Red Nose 1300 308 307