



"Much as it is a distressing time, it is good to relax and focus on healing completely. Seek the help of family and friends."
CATHERINE NAMULINDWA, BUSINESSWOMAN

"Husbands should be there when their wives experience miscarriages. This quickens emotional and physical healing."
MAURINE KISAKYE, HOUSE WIFE

a permanent... found."
MONICA NAKATO, SHOP ATTENDANT

Having a miscarriage breaks even the strongest of hearts. Moses Muwulya, a journalist and wife Rhodah share their distress and how they overcame it.

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A couple's anguish of suffering a miscarriage

When my wife Rhodah Namubiru, 27, conceived early this year, delight is what filled us as a couple.

After our second child succumbed to retinoblastoma (eye cancer) in September 2015, we were left in distress and looked forward to having another child. We were excited, expecting the baby to cover the wounds left by the demise of our daughter.

However, barely two months into the pregnancy, my wife suffered a miscarriage. She had no idea that what started as mild painless bleeding could result into the loss of her treasured baby.

"A month after conception, I started bleeding on and off for about two days. The bleeding would become severe at night, accompanied by abdominal pain. I thought it was not serious and did not seek help until it was too late," she sorrowfully recalls.

Who said men do not cry? I could not hold back my tears after Rhodah called to tell me the sad news. I thought of all the positive things our child would have brought to our lives. Knowing this would not be possible, caused unbearable pain.

However, with counselling from a relative who had gone through two consecutive miscarriages, we managed to pull through.

What is miscarriage?

Miscarriage is the spontaneous (natural) loss of a pregnancy before 28 weeks. It usually happens when the pregnancy is in its first and second trimester.

Dr Ssenyondo Gonzaga, a consultant Obstetric and Gynecologist, notes that spontaneous miscarriages are common, though outweighed by induced ones.

He says much as it is largely a one-time occurrence, one can experience recurrent miscarriages, especially if the likely causes are not identified and treated.

He emphasises that when one experiences a miscarriage, they should go for a medical checkup to establish the likely cause and treat it to avoid recurrent miscarriages.

But most importantly, he says it is good to establish if the miscarriage is complete, since there are cases where parts of the fetus may remain inside the womb leading to infections.

Rhodah Namubiru carries Claire Kisakye who succumbed to cancer in September 2015. PHOTOS BY MOSES MUWULYA



LOWERING THE RISK

To carry a healthy baby, the mother's health before and during the first weeks of conception is important.

Dr Ssenyondo says seeking good pre-conception and prenatal care from experts is very important as this reduces the key risk factors.

It involves checking to establish if the mother has enough micro nutrients, state of the cervix, whether hormones are balanced and offering treatment if such factors fall short.

conceives, a hormone called progesterone is needed to support the pregnancy.

"Some expectant mothers have progesterone insufficiency leading to sudden loss of the baby," he notes

Weak cervix

Dr Ssenyondo further explains that in case of prior unsafe deliveries and abortions, especially when done by unskilled personnel, a cervix may be damaged rendering it incompetent to hold a subsequent pregnancy.

A Cervix is the mouth of the uterus which closes and keeps the pregnancy intact. He says before one conceives, a checkup is essential to rule this out.

Untreated STIs

Dr Ssenyondo says infections need to be tested and treated before one conceives or immediately after conception to reduce the risks.

Malaria

Malaria is an emerging cause of spontaneous abortions, but doctors note that it mostly threatens pregnancies beyond the second trimester. Dr Ssenyondo says due to changes caused by conception, pregnant mothers' immunity gets compromised, predisposing them to severe forms of malaria leading to miscarriages

Stress

Like any other psychological factor, the doctor says it may contribute to a miscarriage because it lowers immunity thus giving room to opportunistic causes. Asked about the warning signs, the gynecologist shares that a pregnant woman should not bleed and any sign of bleeding must be taken seriously because it the biggest sign of miscarriage.

Ssenyondo says the true causes, especially for first time miscarriages are largely unknown but shares some of the notable risk implicated causes which include:

Genetic malformations

This is when the fetus fails to develop well. It is linked to lack of micro nutrients that support the pregnancy. "The first eight weeks of pregnancy are vital for the formation of the fetus. The baby's basic organs

should all be formed by the end of the eight weeks, after which the baby just increases in size," Ssenyondo says.

He says if a mother does not have such needed micro nutrients, there are high chances of miscarriage and if the fetus survives, there will be congenital abnormality and high chances of having a deformed baby.

Hormonal imbalances

Dr Ssenyondo explains that once one



How to cope

Dr Ssenyondo says it is good for a mother or a couple to seek professional assistance to establish the cause of a miscarriage. This, he says, reduces risks of a recurrent miscarriage especially when recurrent risk factors such as hormonal imbalances and untreated infections were key causes.

"We put the victim on post abortion care to avoid any likely complications especially in the event of an incomplete miscarriage,"

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MONTHS A MOTHER SHOULD SPEND BEFORE CONCEIVING AFTER A MISCARRIAGE

Dr Ssenyondo explains. Post abortion family planning may also be administered. The mother is put on short term contraceptives such as injections or condoms to avoid re-conception.

"Whether a miscarriage was induced or spontaneous, ovulation, especially when one miscarried in the first trimester, happens within 11 days," Dr Ssenyondo notes. This, he says, increases the chances of getting pregnant yet it is not ideal to conceive shortly after a miscarriage. He notes that usually a period of four to six months is recommended,

before one re-conceives, depending on the circumstances.

Because of the high expectations, my wife says she wished to conceive as soon as possible. However, the Dr warned against this saying it may cause another miscarriage, especially when the cause is not treated.

To avoid any risk of early conception, the couple was enrolled on post abortion family planning, where short term birth control methods such as condoms were recommended.