

A few months ago I had a miscarriage. It wasn't a planned pregnancy and I wasn't far along so my husband and I weren't too upset by it. I still wanted to write about it though because I thought it would be helpful to others. If you are going through a miscarriage, perhaps having an idea of what to expect may make you feel a bit better. If you have already gone through a miscarriage, perhaps you may feel comforted by knowing others have gone through the same unfortunate event.

I found out I was pregnant very early on. I kept the secret to myself for quite some time. Like I said, we weren't trying and didn't exactly have the funds for another baby at that moment. But I was happy and excited. A few weeks with the secret (six weeks pregnant now) my husband told me he would be getting a better paying job within a month according to his employer. It was this moment that I told him the news. He was a little anxious at first but within a week he had warmed to the idea and kept calling this new baby his sweetie.

Within a couple of days, he and I both told our immediate families. That evening, I started to bleed. It was very light spotting that I wasn't too concerned about. I had been taken into the care of a midwife only days beforehand, so I texted and told her. She indicated that since I was very early in my pregnancy, nothing could be done but waiting or going for blood tests. It was unlikely that an ultrasound would show us anything.

I decided to wait. I knew that blood tests would only tell me what my body was doing, not prevent what was happening. I felt my body knew what it was doing, even if it was a sad outcome.

The bleeding continued and did become heavy over the next few days. I told my midwife and she agreed it was likely a miscarriage. She wanted me to go to a hospital to confirm the pregnancy had passed out of concern for my health. Pregnancies that don't completely pass naturally require a small surgical procedure or, in rare cases, can be life threatening due to infection from remaining tissue or an undiagnosed ectopic pregnancy.

I went to the hospital and told them about my bleeding. I was admitted fairly quickly, as most pregnant women are. As many hospital patients would probably agree, you never want to be the one admitted quickly for fear it means that you are likely in peril. Even though this was a natural miscarriage that had no complications, the hospital staff did their due diligence to ensure that I was safe.

I went through the usual family history questions and vital sign checks with a nurse before I was greeted by two doctors, a physician and a resident. I bled all over their nice hospital bed and sheets, apologizing profusely before being assured it was normal. They were all extremely kind and even joked with me a bit. They increasingly asked me more relatable questions pertaining mostly to

previous pregnancies and this one. They asked about labours, births, and procedures. As I'd had two healthy births at home before this, my answers didn't seem to give them any clues on what to expect. They drew blood and did an ultrasound on what looked like a laptop (no joke). No heartbeat or gestational sac could be seen but they told me that their equipment wasn't high tech enough to see a baby this early on anyway. They asked if I had passed anything the size of a fingertip or bigger. I hadn't. The results of the blood test came back and my HCG levels were 66,000 mIU/ml.

The pregnancy hormone HCG can tell you if you are/were pregnant with two or more blood tests taken over the span of a few days. If your HCG levels rise, the baby is likely to be healthy, if they fall, the baby is likely not viable (cannot live without being within Mom). One HCG level could not tell them anything other than I was pregnant, healthy or not was unknown.

By the way, the nurse with me was kind enough to explain that the phrase "she lost the baby" wasn't used by most hospital staff anymore because of the negative connotation. It is more appropriate to say the baby wasn't viable rather than imply it was a fault of the parent. I couldn't have agreed more with her as I sat in my hospital gown, feeling particularly vulnerable. I agreed I should feel no shame and know that the loss, as unfortunate as it was, was not my own.

Afterwards, I was told that I should come back to the hospital the following day to complete a "real" ultrasound with an ultrasonographer. I did return and I'm glad I did. Unfortunately, she did not see a baby either but she did make me feel better. She was a lovely lady in her 50's. She had a soft, delicate voice and an even softer bedside manner. She told me all about the women she had seen coming and going from her room where she usually gave them bad news. She told me that I was not alone, that miscarriages were something she had been witnessing throughout her life. She also emphasized that miscarriages were through no fault of the parents, that they were how our body cared for us in a way. Of course it is much less sad to say goodbye to a seventh week pregnancy than a new baby, so I agreed with her. From the gentle conversation we shared, I knew that I did not have to feel shame and it was okay to be sad. There were other parents like me and my body was taking care of me. It was comforting.

Her ultrasound confirmed that the gestational sac was now located above my cervix and would pass soon. I was not in any danger and my body was healthy. It was a sad day and it was okay to feel sad but I did appreciate my family as I returned home that day.

Two days later, I was requested to come in for the second blood test. This was the last piece to confirm the miscarriage. I knew I had miscarried but doctors are doctors and they have to do their due diligence. Once again, I returned to the hospital. A very high strung doctor talked with me this time. She was adamant on performing another blood test and ultrasound. I assured her I didn't need

another ultrasound but would do the blood test to confirm the miscarriage. Since I had already missed two half days of work now, I asked if there was any way I could get the results over the phone rather than coming in to see her. She said no but after speaking with her secretary, I learned that I could get the results sent to my family doctor and he could give me the results over the phone. As he was currently on vacation, I would get the results when he got back in two days. This suited me so I was poked one more time and left.

Two days later, my phone rang. It was my family doctor's secretary. She asked for me and then said, "Congratulations, you're pregnant!"

I knew I wasn't pregnant so, regrettably and with sympathy for her, I said she had made a mistake and that I had miscarried. I asked what my HCG levels had been during the second blood test. I could tell she was reading them off the doctor's notes, "HCG 24,000 mIU/ml, call her to congratulate her on her pregnancy."

I told her about the first blood test's results. She apologized and said there must have been a mistake and that she would call me back.

A couple of hours later, I received another phone call. This time, a lady with more bite than remorse in her voice (I assumed she was the one who made the mistake) told me I had indeed miscarried and hung up. I actually laughed this time. Knowing I've made some terrible work-related errors in my career, none of them could compare to mistaking someone for being pregnant. It was a little like being in a comedy movie.

Over the next few days, we slowly told our families the news about the miscarriage. It was kind of pleasant to let everything escape slowly and let the memories pass and rest. Of course, it's always sad knowing what "could have been" and that we don't have our "sweetie" but it's also comforting to know that a third child would make us happy. We cherish our first and second children all the more now as well.

From this experience, I'd like to share with you these messages that I now know: this type of loss is not your own, you are not alone, and your body can protect you from worse pain.

And it's okay to be sad.