

# EAT WELL

## NUTRITION GUIDE TO SUPPORT RECOVERY FROM PREGNANCY AND BABY LOSS

By Dietitians Anita Beckwith and Ruth Harvey; Tommy's Midwife Kate Marsh and Rachael Smith, Trying Again Podcast



This guide shares some hints and tips for healthy eating after miscarriage and baby loss and if you're thinking of trying again for a baby.

Losing a baby at any stage of pregnancy is heartbreaking.  
Your body is going through a level of trauma and it is a difficult time, for both you and your partner.

You may feel you are too tired for a diet,  
or you may feel that all you want to do is reach for the wine bottle, snacks,  
junk food or anything to take the pain away.  
Those feelings are completely normal.

This guide will share some foods and advice that will hopefully help you feel better  
and provide you with some insight to help you make confident moves  
to provide your body with the fuel it needs to heal.

### POST MISCARRIAGE OR BABY LOSS

We detail foods that can help provide the most needed nutrients and goodness following a miscarriage, giving you the tools you need to heal.

### TRYING AGAIN AFTER LOSS

You may want to try again for a baby straight away; if you do there's advice on foods and considerations for your wellbeing.

### PARTNERS

Your healing is important as you navigate loss and find your way through the grief. We provide helpful hints and tips for the weeks and months ahead.





# EAT WELL: POST MISCARRIAGE AND BABYLOSS

Following a miscarriage your body needs time to recover and you need to allow yourself time to heal both physically and mentally. Your body has been busy growing a baby and now you have gone through the trauma of losing that baby your body is having to adjust all over again.

Nutrition can play a role in helping you recover and it may be important to you that food does not become a means of dealing with difficult feelings. At the same time immediately following a miscarriage is not a time to be hard to yourself, and eating and drinking the comfort foods you enjoy is quite normal.

Following miscarriage your body may have lost a lot of blood and fluid. It is important to drink plenty of fluids to rehydrate, aiming for the recommended 1500ml - 2000ml per day. Tea and coffee do count towards your fluid intake but should be kept to no more than 2 cups of coffee per day or 4 cups of tea.

If you lost blood during your miscarriage then your iron levels may be low in which case it is important to consume plenty of iron rich foods. Iron rich foods include: red meat, chicken thighs, tofu, beans and lentils, kale, dried apricots and raisins.

When relying on plant sources of iron it is especially important to consume foods rich in vitamin C to help the iron be absorbed. Examples of Vitamin C rich foods include citrus fruits, for example lemons, oranges and orange juice, peppers, strawberries, blackcurrants and sweet potatoes. If you require a supplement your GP can advise on this.

If you are feeling low in mood and energy and have lost your appetite, focusing on eating regular meals can help. Try not to skip meals or snack too frequently on high fat and high sugar foods.

It can be helpful to combine a little of what you fancy with foods we know to be beneficial, such as dried fruit and nuts with a small amount of chocolate; hummus and vegetable sticks along with crisps; or fruit alongside ice cream.

If you find food a comfort try limiting your comfort foods to once or twice a day. Here are some other ideas for finding comfort: run a bath, read a book, mindful colouring in, phone a friend or family member, research a new holiday destination, practice some gentle yoga or breathing exercises, watch your favourite TV programme, snuggle up in bed with a hot water bottle and write your thoughts in a journal.

## AT A GLANCE

*Things to consider...*

Replacing fluid is important. Drink a recommended 1500ml-2000ml per day - no more than 2 cups of coffee per day or 4 cups of tea.

Loss of blood could mean loss of iron. Iron rich foods include:

- Red meat
- Chicken thighs
- Tofu
- Beans and lentils
- Kale
- Dried apricots
- Raisins

When eating iron-rich foods, consume foods rich in vitamin C

- Citrus fruits
- Peppers
- Strawberries
- Blackcurrants
- Sweet potatoes

Loss of energy or appetite? Here are some tips:

- Eat regular meals
- Smoothies and soups
- Avoid high fat and high sugar foods

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*If you're going  
through it right  
now, please  
know you're  
not alone.  
- Rachael Smith*



## Feeling low?

Combine a little of what you fancy with foods that will help:

- Dried fruit and nuts with a small amount of chocolate
- Hummus and vegetable sticks along with crisps
- Fruit alongside ice cream or chocolate cake

Try limiting your comfort foods to once or twice a day. More balanced alternatives are listed on the next page.



# NOURISH YOUR BODY AFTER MISCARRAIGE

Everybody's experience of miscarriage is different, but as soon as you feel able, it is important to resume healthy habits including eating well so that you can support yourself both mentally and physically.

Try to include every food group in your meals, giving yourself some space to heal 80% healthy: 20% what you fancy type foods.

## Wholegrain carbohydrates

Porridge oats  
Wholegrain cereals  
Wholegrain/rye bread  
Wholewheat pasta  
Brown rice  
Oat cakes, rye crackers  
and plain popcorn

## Lean proteins

White flesh fish  
Chicken/turkey without  
the skin  
Plain Greek yoghurt  
Low fat cottage cheese  
Tofu

## Fruit and vegetables

The more variety of colours the better

Aim for three different colours at each meal

## Healthy fats

Extra virgin olive oil  
Rapeseed oil  
Avocadoes  
Sunflower, Sesame,  
Pumpkin and Flax-seeds  
and Flaxseed  
Almonds, Brazil and  
Walnuts



## Nourishing snack ideas

- Porridge oats with honey
- Overnight oats with berries
- Crumpets
- Popcorn
- Stewed fruit with custard.

If you have lost your appetite these snacks along with milk, soups, smoothies and juices are a good place to start as you build up your energy and nutritional intake.



# EAT WELL: TRYING AGAIN AFTER LOSS

If you wish to conceive, the diet which best supports fertility is the Mediterranean diet.

This is a diet high in vegetables and fruit, wholegrain carbohydrates, fresh fish, low in meat and dairy and with a good intake of healthy fats such as extra virgin olive oil, avocado, nuts and seeds.

A Mediterranean diet is ideal to provide key nutrients known to aid conception including omega 3 fatty acids, vitamin E, selenium, folate, and iron.

Remember to reduce your caffeine intake to no more than 200mg per day. That equals 2 mugs of instant coffee (1 mug of filter coffee) or 3 cups of tea. Consider switching to decaffeinated coffee. Other foods containing caffeine include cola, high energy drinks and chocolate.

And it is best to cut out alcohol altogether.

## Supplements

If you are trying to conceive it is recommended that everyone take 10mcg of vitamin D per day and 400mg of folic acid (5mg if you have a BMI over 30, a history of neural tube defects (NTD) and those with diabetes, coeliac disease or epilepsy).

You may choose to take a general pregnancy supplement, but it is still important to be eating a variety of food sources of all vitamins and minerals.

You may also consider taking CoEnzyme Q10. There is growing evidence that supplementing with the reduced form of CoEnzyme Q10 (reduced CoQ10): Ubiquinol is beneficial for egg and sperm quality. Ubiquinol is a powerful antioxidant, and is particularly useful in those trying to conceive in later life.

You can also find CoQ10 in the form of Ubiquinone but this has been found to be less well absorbed. dosing differs between the two types. In order to optimise and tailor your supplement protocol to your needs and best complement your dietary intake it is best to seek the expert nutritional advice such as that from a Registered Dietitian specialising in fertility.

There are many supplements that are sold with fertility in mind, so if you find it hard to conceive we would advise seeking help from a health professional who can help advise on which ones may help you.

## Body weight and fertility

There is evidence to show that having a healthy body weight is associated with higher rates of fertility.

In women, this is associated with conception, whereas in men it is associated with a higher sperm count and improved sperm quality. Reduced fertility has been found in individuals who are either under or overweight.

Fertility and weight management can be a very difficult combination and seeking support if/when you wish to lose weight can be helpful. It's not easy to make lifestyle changes, and you may have tried different ways before.

Healthy nutrition and lifestyle changes are recommended for all men and women when trying to conceive.

## AT A GLANCE

*Things to consider...*

Reduce your caffeine intake to no more than 200mg per day.

Omega 3s:

- Oily fish
- Vegetable oils, flaxseed oil.
- Nuts (especially walnuts), flax seeds

Vitamin E:

- Plant based oils (sunflower, safflower, soybean)
- Wheatgerm (cereals and cereal products)
- Green leafy vegetables,
- Almonds
- Red peppers
- Avocadoes

Selenium:

- Brazil nuts (no more than 2 per day)
- Shellfish
- Beef
- Turkey
- Chicken
- Pulses (beans and lentils)
- Fortified cereals

Folate:

- Green leafy vegetables
- Beans
- Sunflower seeds
- Wholegrains,
- Seafood
- Eggs

Iron:

- Red meat
- Chicken thighs
- Lentils, beans
- Spinach, kale
- Dried apricots

CoEnzyme:

- Meat
- Oily fish
- Peanuts, sesame seeds
- Cauliflower
- Oranges
- Beans and lentils

If you have a low intake of meat and dairy you may also need to seek individual advice about B12, iodine and choline.

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*Being aware of the effect the miscarriage has had on you can help you manage your own mental health.*

*- Anita Beckwith & Ruth Harvey*





## AT A GLANCE

*Ideas for easy food prep...*

- Batch cook.
- Use a slow cooker.
- Opt for quick to prepare dishes such as tinned beans, pasta and sauce with protein and veg added, omelettes, fish finger sandwich, couscous salads and soups.
- Utilise your freezer by buying frozen foods that are quick to use such as chargrilled veg, Quorn, prawns, herbs, and roasted sweet potato.
- Ask friends and family to bring a meal when they visit.
- Use meal kit delivery services.

## EAT WELL: PARTNERS

*Advice and tips on food and diet at this time.*

Although you didn't carry the baby, you may still benefit from taking care of the foods you eat at this time. You could be feeling: shock, anger, grief, confusion or failure. You may be asking "Was it my fault?"

**"It is important to know that miscarriages very rarely happen because of something you or your partner did or didn't do. Your partner may also be blaming herself for what happened. You may need to reassure her that it wasn't her fault either."**  
- Tommy's

It is normal to grieve differently, no one person is the same. You may be trying to be protective of your partner and having to focus on the daily practicalities of life. For example, your partner may be too tired to cook and so this guide maybe helpful for you too.

Communication between you and your partner matters in this moment, you maybe grieving differently but you are grieving the same loss.

Eating well can be protective of your mental and physical health. If you are needing to support your partner who is recovering from the physical effects of a miscarriage then preparing simple nutritious meals can be a way of supporting you both.

## Fertility for males

If you wish to conceive the diet which best supports fertility is the Mediterranean diet. Any small sustainable changes you can make now will give you and your partner the best chance of a healthy pregnancy.

Vitamin C is another antioxidant that has been found to improve sperm and may be worth taking, but again dietary sources should be optimised such as oranges, potatoes, peppers, strawberries, currants and kiwi.

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*It is quite common that a couple will grieve differently.*  
- Kate Marsh,  
Tommy's

## More information

We hope this guide will help you, there is some other really useful information on the following websites:

- [Calculate your BMI - NHS](#)
- [Mediterranean diet - NHS](#)
- [Healthy weight - NHS](#)
- [Vitamins, supplements and nutrition in pregnancy - NHS](#)
- [Thinking About Another Pregnancy leaflet - Miscarriage Association](#)
- [Having a healthy diet in pregnancy - Tommy's PregnancyHub](#)
- [Overweight and pregnant - Tommys PregnancyHub](#)

### Anita Beckwith

Anita has over two decades experience working as UK registered dietitian in both the NHS and freelance. Anita specialises in fertility and diabetes (type 1, type 2 and gestational).

Anita's work philosophy is one of pro-choice, anti-judgement with the aim of reducing stigma.

Find out more via her website:  
[www.anitabeckwith.com](http://www.anitabeckwith.com)

### Ruth Harvey

Ruth is a Registered Dietitian who specialises in fertility, pregnancy and post-natal nutrition.

Ruth has worked in the NHS and in Australia and is the owner of Pod&Pea Nutrition which she established to provide women with a reliable source of nutrition support.

More information can be found at  
[www.podandpeanutrition.org](http://www.podandpeanutrition.org)

### Kate Marsh

Kate is the midwifery manager at Tommy's, she has been a midwife for 10 years, in both hospital and community environments.

Kate is also a practising NHS Health Visitor with a MSc in Public Health.

Tommy's is a UK charity which includes providing support for families going through miscarriage. Find out more at [www.tommys.org](http://www.tommys.org).

### Rachael Smith

Rachael is a journalist based in the UK and is the creator, host and producer of the Trying Again Podcast.

The podcast shares honest, brave and true stories, thoughts and insights into the usually silent world of miscarriage.

Find out more via the website:  
[www.tryingagainpodcast.com](http://www.tryingagainpodcast.com)