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## Repeated pregnancy loss, Abortus Habitualis

Sources: sundhed.dk

<https://www.sundhed.dk/borger/patienthaandbogen/graviditet/sygdomme-og-komplikationer/komplikationer-i-graviditeten/gentagne-graviditetstab/>

### Facts

Spontaneous abortion or pregnancy loss is a lost pregnancy before pregnancy week 22 + 0

- Repeated pregnancy losses are defined as at least three consecutive pregnancy losses before week 12 of pregnancy, or at least two after normal conditions have been established by neck fold scan.
- Large psychological influence, a large Danish study, has shown that stress and moderate to severe depression are more frequent in this group compared to other women trying to have children

### Causes of pregnancy loss

- There is no evidence that stress and depression lead to pregnancy loss, but rather it is a consequence of pregnancy loss
- The woman's age and number of previous losses are the most significant factors for the chance of having a child
- Smoking, alcohol, abnormalities in the uterus, chromosomal abnormalities in the couple, disorders in blood clotting, in the hormonal or immune system are known risk factors

### Surveys

- The examinations consist of a thorough medical history, examination of the uterus and blood tests on the woman as well as chromosome examination of the couple
- Despite a thorough investigation, a large proportion of couples will have unexplained repeated pregnancy losses. In this group, the woman's immune system plays an important role

### Treatment

- Treatment is aimed at risk factors and support in subsequent pregnancies, and much research is being done to uncover causes and treatment options.

### What are repeated abortions (abortus habitualis)?

Spontaneous abortion or pregnancy loss means that the pregnancy dies before the end of the 22nd week of pregnancy. If you have had three or more pregnancy losses in a row before week 12, or you have had two or more losses after a normal neck fold scan, it is called the repeated pregnancy loss or abortus habitualis.

Pregnancy loss is the most common pregnancy complication. Between 25 and 30% of all couples experience that one or more pregnancies end in a loss.

25% of pregnancies where the woman is aware that she is pregnant end up in a pregnancy loss.

### What are the symptoms of recurrent pregnancy loss?

Women who have lost pregnancies several times know the symptoms. There may be cessation of pregnancy symptoms, vaginal bleeding and abdominal pain.



### What symptoms should you pay special attention to?

You need to pay special attention if you are pregnant and have heavy bleeding and pain.

How is the diagnosis made?

The diagnosis of repeated pregnancy loss is made when you have had three or more pregnancy losses in a row before week 12 or two or more losses after a normal neck fold scan. All pregnancies that are confirmed count. I.e. positive urine or blood test, scan where pregnancy has been seen, or scraping or collection of pregnancy tissue.

### What causes repeated pregnancy losses?

There are many reasons why a pregnancy ends in a pregnancy loss. Some are due to disease in the fetus, while others are due to causes in the parents. Causes in the man are very sparsely investigated. In couples with repeated pregnancy losses, there is a defect in the fetal genetic system (chromosomes) in approx. 40%. The incidence of chromosomal defects in the fetus decreases with the number of pregnancy losses, but increases with the woman's age.

Causes in the couple can be chromosomal defects (the so-called balanced, which are asymptomatic but can be inherited, and unbalanced where they are not compatible with life). Lifestyle factors in both men and women can be important, which is why it is recommended to have a normal BMI, to avoid smoking and to consume only moderate amounts of alcohol.

In women, there may be causes in the form of changes in the uterus or disturbances in the blood clotting, hormone and immune system.

### Are repeated pregnancy losses hereditary?

There is an increased incidence of pregnancy loss among mothers and sisters of women with recurrent pregnancy loss.

### Why do some women get recurrent pregnancy losses?

There are many risk factors for repeated pregnancy losses. There are also many couples where one does not find risk factors. Although a possible cause is identified, effective treatment may not be available.

### Malformation of the uterus

Malformations of the uterus may increase the risk of pregnancy loss. It may be a septum in the uterus or fibroids (muscle nodules) under the lining of the uterus.

The uterus can be examined with an ultrasound scan. The examination can be supplemented with a water scan, where a little sterile saline is introduced into the uterus. Or you can do a binocular examination.

### Chromosome changes

If the fetal chromosomes are abnormal, it is a good sign. This suggests that the loss of pregnancy is a coincidence. If there are normal chromosomes in the fetus, there is a greater risk of another cause for the loss.

The chromosomes of the couple are examined by a blood test. Hos ca. 5% of men / women with repeated pregnancy losses have two chromosome pieces swapped places - this is called a translocation. It can cause pregnancy loss in up to 50% of the couple's pregnancies. If one finds this, one will refer to genetic counseling and fertility treatment with egg sorting is a possible treatment.

### Hormone disorders



Metabolic problems can be a contributing factor - this is examined with a blood test. In addition, if other hormonal disorders are suspected, these can be investigated.

### Immunological conditions

During a pregnancy, a woman's immune system must accept the fetus, which has a different type of tissue than her. It is a complicated process that we still only partially understand. If the immune system is too active, it can lead to rejection of the fetus.

Women with repeated pregnancy losses more often have special antibodies in their blood than women who have had children without problems. Some believe that these antibodies can cause pregnancy loss by damaging the placenta. Others believe that the antibodies are merely a symptom that these women have a poorly regulated and aggressive immune system.

It is difficult to measure the immune system, but if you detect autoantibodies in a blood test, you can follow up with other tests.

### Blood clotting ability

Some changes in blood clotting have the effect of repeated pregnancy losses. If these are found, treat with blood thinners in the next pregnancy.

### Lifestyle

Smoking, excessive alcohol intake and being overweight in both man and woman can increase the risk of pregnancy loss. There is a general concern that stress can lead to one pregnancy loss. There is no evidence for this - on the contrary, it is a well-described consequence of many pregnancy losses.

### How to check for recurrent pregnancy loss?

At the first consultation, the doctor tries to get an overview of how the previous pregnancies have gone with you and using previous medical records. It can be a pretty complicated affair. Therefore, it is a good idea to write down information about previous pregnancies beforehand:

- dates
- how far you were in her pregnancy
- what was the treatment

The doctor also collects information about your state of health and asks about hereditary diseases in your immediate family.

After 3 pregnancy losses in a row before week 12 or two after a normal neck fold scan, you can be referred for an examination and possible treatment.

Based on an examination of the uterus and a series of blood tests as well as your prehistory and age, the doctor can give a reasonable estimate that the next pregnancy will go well without treatment.

This can be a great help when you need to consider whether you dare to try a new pregnancy, as well as whether you should accept a report and any treatment options that cost time and effort and can have side effects.

### How to treat recurrent pregnancy losses?

The treatment addresses possible causes found during the investigation. Unfortunately, there is a group of patients where no possible explanation is detected. Here you can offer participation in studies in an attempt to clarify the causes and treatment options. It is shown to be important both to



increase the chance of childbirth and to reduce stress in the couple that they are followed closely in a subsequent pregnancy.

### what can I do?

There is not much you can do yourself to prevent repeated pregnancy losses. You can avoid harmful effects such as smoking, alcohol and obesity - and make sure you are well treated if you have diseases.

What are the long-term prospects?

The long-term outlook depends on:

- the number of pregnancy losses you have had
- the number of births you have had
- your age
- Other factors are smoking, alcohol, obesity and any chronic diseases

### How common are repeated pregnancy losses?

2-5% of all women experience three or more pregnancy losses in a row. In these cases, there is talk of abortion habitus or repeated pregnancy losses. Fortunately, more than 70% of couples with repeated pregnancy losses succeed in having a child.