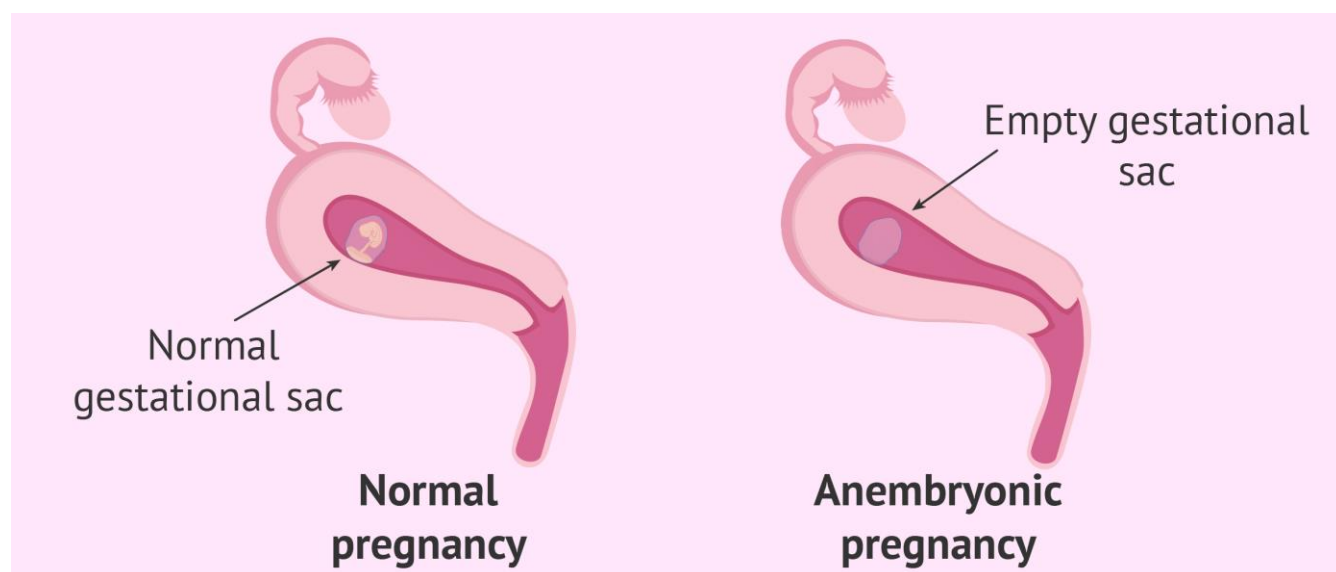


## BLIGHTED OVUM – ANEMBRYONIC PREGNANCY

Having a miscarriage can be a very unhappy experience. It can be made worse if you don't understand the medical language that is sometimes used to describe what has happened. And it can be even more confusing when there are several different terms that mean the same thing. This leaflet explains what a blighted ovum is – and the different medical terms that might be used when it is diagnosed.

**Blighted ovum** and **anembryonic pregnancy** both describe a particular kind of early miscarriage. Although there are the beginnings of a baby, the cells that will become the baby stop developing early on, and the tiny embryo is reabsorbed. However, the pregnancy sac, where the baby should develop, continues to grow. It is diagnosed by ultrasound scan. The scan picture shows a pregnancy sac which doesn't have a developing baby inside, as it should. (This is sometimes described as showing no fetal pole). This kind of miscarriage is usually discovered between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy, sometimes at a routine early scan. You may still have pregnancy symptoms and have no idea that anything is wrong, so it can come as a real shock.



### Why does it happen? Was it something I did?

Doctors think that a blighted ovum pregnancy happens because of an error in the early development of the baby – for example, a chromosome error. It is extremely unlikely to be caused by anything that you or your partner did or didn't do.

### **Will it happen again?**

It might, but it's unlikely. A blighted ovum is a chance event and most women go on to have a healthy pregnancy.

### **I was told there was no baby there. But I felt pregnant and the pregnancy test was positive**

Symptoms like sore breasts, nausea and tiredness are caused by raised levels of pregnancy hormones in your body. They can't tell you whether the baby is developing properly or not. Unfortunately, in this kind of miscarriage those hormone levels can stay high for some time after the baby has died, so pregnancy tests can still be positive and you may still feel pregnant.

### **I feel as if I shouldn't be so upset, if there was no baby**

There are no rules about how you should or shouldn't feel. But you were pregnant and may well have started thinking "baby" and planning for the future. Even if you find out that the baby died very early on, you may still have a real sense of loss. That might be especially true if you had no idea that anything was wrong.

### **Finally**

Whether it happens early or late in pregnancy, the experience of any miscarriage can be very distressing. Whatever your feelings, you don't have to bear them alone.

**"It's reassuring to  
know that I did not  
do anything to make  
this happen."**