SELF-PACED LESSON

After reading this lesson, click the survey link at the end to answer a few questions and receive nutrition education credit for your class.

Caring for Yourself After Pregnancy & Infant Loss

WIC
Women Infants and Children



WIC offers our deepest sympathy to you and your family during this emotional time. We are incredibly sorry for your loss and understand that everyone's experience is unique. Because healing is a process, we hope this material will give you information and tools to support you during this journey.

There is no easy way to navigate the loss of an infant. Whatever you are feeling, your feelings are valid and support is available. As you grieve, be gentle and patient with yourself. The following suggestions are intended to offer comfort and to help you care for yourself – mind, body and spirit – as you move through this difficult time.

Follow-Up Care

Following up with a healthcare provider after loss is important for many reasons. A provider:

- Can offer emotional support and provide resources for counseling or support groups
- Will check to ensure your body is healing properly
- Can investigate underlying health issues and help you make informed decisions about future pregnancies

Coping with Grief

Grief is a personal journey, and everyone experiences it differently. There's no right or wrong way to grieve and healing does not happen on a set timeline.

- Be patient with yourself and give yourself permission to feel what you feel.
- Surround yourself with people or organizations who lift you up and provide encouragement.
- Ask for help. Allow trusted family members, friends, and caring professionals to walk alongside you during this time. Accepting help can make the journey feel a little lighter.
- Practice self-care by eating well, resting and finding activities you enjoy.

Grieving is not about forgetting or "moving on"; it is about learning to carry your loss while gradually finding a way to move forward.

Hydration

Staying hydrated is important for your overall well-being and recovery. When your body doesn't have enough water, you can become dehydrated. Signs of dehydration include:

- Headaches/sluggishness
- Dark-colored urine
- Dry lips or sticky mouth
- Sleepiness and irritability
- Flushed skin

Here are some tips to help you drink more water:

- Carry a water bottle with you wherever you go.
- Add cut-up fresh fruits like lemons, cucumbers, or berries.
- Make ice cubes from 100% fruit juice or fresh fruit in water.



Nutrition

Experiencing a loss can make you feel different about eating. You may not feel hungry or you may feel like eating more than usual, both reactions can happen. Good nutrition after a loss is important for:

- Healing
- Improving mood and emotions
- Improving energy levels
- Preventing health issues
- Keeping bones strong
- Supporting your immune system

Try these tips to get the good nutrition your body needs to heal and feel better:

- Set a timer to remind yourself to eat small, regular meals.
- Keep healthy, easy snack foods on hand, like cheese, fruit, vegetables, etc.
- Make foods that look and smell good.
- Take a multivitamin.

Daily Food Group Recommendations:

Nutrition needs are unique. Here are some tips to get the most from your food groups. Make an appointment with your WIC nutritionist to determine your specific needs.

- **Dairy:** 3 cups per day
  - Choose low-fat dairy products. WIC provides low-fat milk, cheese, yogurt, tofu, soy milk, buttermilk and other milk substitutes.
- **Protein:** 5 - 7 oz per day
  - Choose a variety of animal and plant-based proteins. WIC provides eggs, canned fish, beans, split peas, nut butter, and tofu.
- **Fruit:** 1 ½ - 2 ½ cups per day
  - Choose a variety of fruits. Include fruits from every color of the rainbow. WIC provides fresh, frozen and canned fruit.
- **Vegetables:** 2 ½ - 3 ½ cups per day
  - Choose a variety of vegetables from every color of the rainbow. WIC provides fresh, frozen, and canned vegetables.
- **Grains:** 6 - 10 oz per day
  - WIC provides a variety of whole grains including whole-grain cereals, bread, quinoa, English muffins, oats, tortillas, pasta and more.

WIC Foods Help Your Body Recover

Protein



Protein in eggs, peanut butter, and beans help your body rebuild and repair.

Iron



Iron in beans, lentils, and cereal helps keep your blood healthy and can improve energy levels.

Vitamins and Minerals



Vitamins and minerals from fruits and vegetables aid swift healing.

Calcium



Calcium in milk, cheese, and yogurt help keep your bones and teeth healthy and strong.

Lactation

After a pregnancy loss, your body may still produce breast milk. This can be both emotionally difficult and physically uncomfortable. Here's some tips to follow if you are experiencing discomfort.

- Wear a supportive, well-fitting bra, such as a sports bra. Avoid bras with underwire and don't bind your breasts which can cause plugged ducts and mastitis.
- Express just enough milk to relieve the pressure if your breasts become too uncomfortable. Over-pumping can make your breasts produce more milk.
- Apply cold packs to help with swelling and discomfort. Frozen packs of peas or corn work well, as they conform to the shape of your breast. Be sure to wrap ice packs or frozen veggies in a thin towel or other cloth to protect your skin. Do this for 10-20 minutes several times per day.
- Wear breast pads to help with leaking milk, if needed.
- Minimize stimulation to the breasts. Avoid extended warm showers.
- Apply chilled green cabbage leaves to the breasts to help relieve fullness. Replace them when they become wilted.
- Avoid excessive salt intake and drink plenty of fluids.
- Talk to your healthcare provider about a pain reliever and/or anti-inflammatory medication as needed.
- Contact your healthcare provider or lactation professional if you need help managing milk production or discomfort.

You can choose to pump and donate your milk to other babies in need. A lactation consultant or your healthcare provider can help. WIC provides breast pumps to qualified bereaved mothers. Contact your local WIC clinic for assistance.

The Oklahoma Mother's Milk Bank accepts human milk donations to help vulnerable babies receive the nutrition they need. To learn more, click here:

https://okmilkbank.org/bereavement-program/

Movement

Moving your body after a loss can benefit your body and mind. Once your healthcare provider has cleared you for activity:

- Start with slow, easy walks. Increase duration and pace gradually as your energy returns.
- Include light stretching and relaxed yoga that doesn't cause discomfort.
- Progress to strength training slowly.
- Listen to your body. If something doesn't feel right, take a break or switch activities.



Resources:

Share Pregnancy & Infant Loss Support

The National Share office hosts weekly online group chats at no cost.
Learn more and connect by clicking here:
https://nationalshare.org/online-support

Parents Responding to Infant Death Experience (PRIDE)

Norman Regional Hospital
3300 Healthplex Parkway
Norman, OK 73072
Call 405-515-3520 and leave a voicemail regarding PRIDE services.

https://www.normanregional.com/services/womens-health/resources/bereavement/

Calm Waters

Pregnancy Loss, Infant Loss, and Infertility
Call 405-841-4800 or email info@calmwaters.org.

https://www.calmwaters.org/our-services/grief-support-groups/

MEND

5401 S. Harvard Ave
Tulsa, OK 74135
918-694-4325 or cat@mend.org

https://www.mend.org/

The Compassionate Friends

Online support for parents, grandparents, and siblings grieving the death of a child.

https://www.compassionatefriends.org/find-support/online-communities/online-support/

Oklahoma SIDS Program

Oklahoma State Department of Health
Maternal and Child Health Service
123 Robert S. Kerr Ave, Ste. 1702
Oklahoma City, OK 73102-6406
1-405-426-8113 or MCH@health.ok.gov

Congratulations, you have finished!

Have more questions? Contact your local WIC nutritionist!

One More Step

Click here to complete the survey and receive credit

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OKLAHOMA State Department of Health

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