

# New study into impact on women who lose a baby

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(Medical Xpress)—Researchers at the University of Adelaide hope that women who experience pregnancy loss - such as miscarriage and stillbirth - will receive better care thanks to new research aimed at finding out exactly what they go through at this difficult time in their lives.

Pregnancy loss is a major issue, with Australian Bureau of Statistics figures showing that 1,748 [stillbirths](#) (after 20 weeks' gestation) were recorded in Australia in 2011.

Between 15-20% of all known pregnancies end in miscarriage (prior to 20 weeks' gestation) and there are many other [miscarriages](#) that go unrecorded. Some pregnancies are also terminated because of fetal abnormalities.

Speaking in the lead up to Red Nose Day, University of Adelaide Masters of Clinical Psychology student Catherine Collins says there is still relatively little research into what [women](#) experience, and how their [pregnancy loss](#) affects their relationships.

"Much of the research into this issue either looks at the medical conditions associated with pregnancy loss or [mental illness](#) caused by it - the day-to-day grief and [sadness](#) women experience tends to be overlooked," Ms Collins says.

"Our research focuses on women's [emotional experience](#) of pregnancy

loss, the impact of this on relationships with partners and children, and women's experience of support from the health care system."

Ms Collins says a recent study in the US found higher rates of divorce after a couple experienced stillbirth and miscarriage, with 29% of women who had experienced a stillbirth and 24% of women who had miscarried divorcing their husbands, compared with 17% of divorce among all women.

"There are significant emotional issues for women who experience pregnancy loss. While there has been an increased research focus on grief in recent years, there are still inconsistencies in its definition and little understanding of the incidence, intensity and duration of grief in these cases," Ms Collins says.

"Our study will help to improve the understanding of how women are affected by losing a pregnancy.

"If health care professionals are well informed about how women think and feel when they lose a pregnancy, they will be better able to provide care to those women. Ultimately, we hope that families who experience pregnancy loss in the future may benefit from the results of this study."

Provided by University of Adelaide

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