

Taking your baby home following their death



Introduction

We are deeply sorry that your baby has died. We understand there is a lot of information given to you at this time and many decisions that need to be made. We are here to support you with this. This leaflet explains some of your options and provides practical guidance so that you are aware and understand the choices open to you.

Your right to take your baby home

It may be important for you to take your baby home, allowing you time together, quietly and privately with family and friends. You can take your baby home directly from the ward or hospital mortuary once any legal documentation has been completed.

How do I take my baby home?

You may take your baby home with you straight away, or you may go home first and bring your baby home later.

Your baby can be transported in your own car. You may wish to carry your baby in your arms, use a Moses basket, a casket obtained from a funeral director or one that you have made yourself. However, consideration should be given to the gestational age of your baby and fragility of their body when deciding how to take them home. Your midwife can help you with this decision.

Alternately you may wish to use the services of a funeral director to bring your baby home; there may be a charge for this service.

We would advise avoiding public transport due to emotional distress and to protect your privacy and others'.

Will I need to sign any forms?

Before leaving the hospital, you will be asked to sign a form confirming that you are taking your baby home and therefore accepting responsibility for their care, transfer and will be arranging their burial or cremation.

There is no legal requirement for a funeral service to be held for babies born under 24 weeks of gestation, unless your baby was born with definite signs of life. We can offer you a commemorative certificate. You can also request a baby loss certificate from the government. Please type the following link into your internet browser.

Baby Loss Certificate

<https://www.gov.uk/request-baby-loss-certificate>

The law requires that babies who are stillborn from 24 weeks of pregnancy or die after birth are buried or cremated. They must be registered in line with the Births and Deaths Registration Act.

If your baby was stillborn or died following birth, you will be given a Certificate of Stillbirth or Neonatal Death Certificate, which is completed by the attending midwife or doctor and is then sent to the registration services. They will contact you to register your baby's death.

Details of the Registrar's offices can be found at the end of this leaflet.

Post-mortem

You may still take your baby home beforehand, but it is recommended that your baby come home for a limited duration of 24 to 36 hours. This is to ensure your baby is transferred for their post-mortem sooner rather than later and to minimise any changes in your baby that might affect the post-mortem itself.

Before you go home, we will arrange for you to bring your baby back to the hospital at an agreed date and time prior to the post-mortem. If you wish to have your baby back at home again after the post-mortem this can be arranged.

When your baby is at home

You may wish to spend quiet time together, introduce your baby to close family and friends, and create lasting memories. Please be aware that natural changes in appearance occur over time. These may include:

- Discolouration of the skin, especially the lips
- Peeling of the skin
- Some loss of blood from the nose, mouth or skin
- Some stiffness to the baby's body or limbs
- Coolness of the skin
- Baby beginning to emit an odour

To help slow down these changes it is important that you are aware of how to care for your baby in the home environment:

- Keep your baby in a cool room, with no heating on
- We will give you a special cot to help keep your baby cool.
- Try to keep all windows closed
- Ensure pets are kept out of the room
- Use a light blanket or sheet over the baby
- If you are planning to arrange your baby's funeral service, we would encourage you to contact your funeral director as soon as possible, so they are aware that the baby is with you at home.

Burial and cremation options for your baby

Thinking about funeral options, burial or cremation for your baby can be extremely tough. The bereavement midwife will be happy to support you when deciding what option will be best for you, your family and your baby.

You may choose:

- Burial in a cemetery or churchyard
- Hospital cremation (only if your baby is under 24 weeks with no signs of life).
- Cremation at a local crematorium
- Burial on your own private land (with appropriate guidance)
- Burial on privately owned woodland burial sites

Considerations for a private burial

- It is essential that you obtain permission to complete a burial where you are not the owner of the land involved.
- If there is any doubt over ownership, you should contact HM Land Registry to check who the registered land owner is.
- If you have a mortgage or loan against the property where the baby is to be buried, you should notify any company or individual who has an interest in the property.
- You should record the date and place of burial in a formal letter, which should be attached to the title deeds of your property or land.
- Your baby must be wrapped or buried in environmentally friendly, biodegradable material (plastic containers, etc., must not be used).
- You should be aware that such a burial may deter future prospective purchasers or occupiers and affect the resale value of the property.
- When a burial takes place on private land, there is no guarantee that the burial site will not be disturbed at a later date. You may wish to take advice about this from a solicitor or from the Coroner's office.
- After a neonatal death (not after a stillbirth), the burial authorisation must be completed by the landowner, giving the date and place of burial. This must be received by the Registrar of Births and Deaths within 96 hours after the burial.
- There is no legal requirement to inform the Environment Agency in advance of a burial, although

you may wish to confirm that the intended burial site meets their safety standards for any local watercourses or other local issues.

- There must be no danger to water courses or supplies and there must be no danger of bodily products leaking onto adjoining land.
- The burial site should not be within 10 metres of the nearest field drain, 30 metres from the nearest spring or watercourse or 250 metres of a well, borehole or spring that supplies water for human consumption or used in food production.
- Babies born before 24 weeks of gestation should be buried at a depth of at least 45 centimetres. For babies who are stillborn or die shortly after birth, a depth of 1.25 metres is recommended.

Support

We understand this is an extremely difficult time. Your bereavement midwife or healthcare team is available to help and can give you support with:

- Registration processes
- Funeral arrangements
- Emotional support and signposting

Contact information

HM Land Registry

Tel: 0844 892 111

Website: www.landregistry.gov.uk

Bereavement Officer

Cheltenham General Hospital

Tel: 0300 422 4753

Gloucestershire Royal Hospital

Tel: 0300 422 6742

Bereavement Midwives

Tel: 0300 422 5564

Registrars Offices

To make an appointment at your nearest Registry Office:

Tel: 01242 532 455

Further information

Memorial Woodlands

Earthcott Green

Alveston

Bristol

BS35 3TA

Tel: 01454 414 999

Website: www.memorialwoodlands.com

Usk Castle Chase

The Market Tavern
26 Agincourt Square

Monmouth

NP25 3BT

Tel: 01600 716 438

Website: www.usknaturalburials.co.uk

Greenfields Woodland of Remembrance

Shotts Farm

Malvern Road

Staunton

Gloucester

GL19 3NZ

Tel: 01452 840 460

Natural Death Centre

Tel: 01962 712 690

Website: www.naturaldeath.org.uk

Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society (Sands)

Tel: 020 7436 5881

Website: www.sands.org.uk

Child Bereavement UK Charity

Tel: 0800 02 888 40

Website: www.childbereavement.org.uk

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Shared Decision Making

If you are asked to make a choice, you may have lots of questions that you want to ask. You may also want to talk over your options with your family or friends. It can help to write a list of the questions you want answered and take it to your appointment.

Ask 3 Questions

To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions if you asked to make a choice about your healthcare.

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?



These resources have been adapted with kind permission from the MAGIC Programme, supported by the Health Foundation.

***Ask 3 Questions** is based on Shepherd HL, et al. Three questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial. Patient Education and Counselling, 2011;84: 379-85



<https://aqua.nhs.uk/resources/shared-decision-making-case-studies/>



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