

# Taking your baby home following their death

## Introduction

We are sorry to hear that your baby has died and would like to offer our support at this time. There are many decisions to be made at this sad time and you may be considering whether to take your baby home before their cremation or burial. The following information is given so that you are aware and understand the choices open to you.

## Can I take my 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.

If a post-mortem examination is to be arranged you will be unable to take your baby home directly from the ward however, you can arrange to have your baby at home after this has been completed.

## How do I take my baby home?

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.

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.

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**Patient  
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## Will I need to sign any forms?

Before leaving the hospital, you will be asked to sign a form stating that you are taking your baby home and will be arranging their burial or cremation.

There is no legal requirement for a funeral service to be held, but the law requires that babies who are stillborn or die after birth are buried or cremated. If your baby was stillborn or died following birth, you will be given a Certificate of Stillbirth or Neonatal Death Certificate and will need to contact the Registrar's Office to register your baby's death. Details of the Registrar's offices can be found at the end of the leaflet.

## At home

When you are at home, the room that your baby will be in needs to be kept cool and well ventilated. If the weather is particularly hot you can hire room coolers. A funeral director will be able to advise you. The length of time that your baby is at home with you will depend on your own wishes. Some parents have their baby at home the day or night before the burial or cremation, and for others, a longer period is needed. You should be aware that the appearance of your baby's skin may change during this time.

## Burial outside a cemetery

If you are considering a burial for your baby, there are alternatives to burial in a cemetery. There are many different types of funerals, dependent on your beliefs and values. Although burial mainly happens in purpose designed cemeteries or churchyards, there has been an increase in the number of burials in privately owned land, such as gardens or farmland. There are also privately owned woodland burial sites if you did not wish to bury in your own land or in the local cemetery.

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## Where can I bury my baby?

You may wish to bury your baby in your own garden, or in some other place (in the countryside, for example) that holds a special meaning for you. There are several advantages of this form of burial. It allows you to organise a very personal funeral reduce the costs by avoiding the use of a funeral director, making your own coffin and not having to purchase a plot in a cemetery.

## Guidelines to be followed if you wish to carry out your own burial

- It is essential that you obtain permission to complete a burial where you are not the land owner of the ground involved. If there is any doubt over ownership you should contact HM Land Registry, to check who is the registered land owner.
- 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, biodegradable material (plastic containers etc. must not be used).
- There must be no danger to water courses or supplies and there must be no danger of bodily products leaking onto adjoining land.
- 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.
- The burial site should not be within 10 metres of any standing or running water, or 50 metres of a well, borehole or spring that supplies water for human consumption.

## Patient Information

- Babies born before 24 weeks 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.
- You should be aware that such a burial may deter future prospective purchasers or occupiers and affect the re-sale 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.

## Contact information

### HM Land Registry

Tel: 0844 892 111

Website: [www.landregistry.gov.uk](http://www.landregistry.gov.uk)

### Bereavement Officer

Cheltenham General Hospital

Tel: 0300 422 4753

Gloucestershire Royal Hospital

Tel: 0300 422 6742

### 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](http://www.memorialwoodlands.com)

**Patient  
Information**

**Usk Castle Chase**

The Market Tavern  
26 Agincourt Square  
Monmouth  
NP25 3BT  
Tel: 01600 716 438  
Website: [www.usknaturalburials.co.uk](http://www.usknaturalburials.co.uk)

**Greenfields Woodland of Remembrance**

Shotts Farm  
Malvern Road  
Staunton  
Gloucestershire  
GL19 3NZ  
Tel: 01452 840 460

**Natural Death Centre**

Tel: 01962 712 690  
Website: [www.naturaldeath.org.uk](http://www.naturaldeath.org.uk)

**Sands**

Tel: 020 7436 5881  
Website: [www.sands.org.uk](http://www.sands.org.uk)

**Child Bereavement UK Charity**

Tel: 0800 02 888 40  
Website: [www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk)

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