

# Taking your baby home

Information and advice for bereaved parents

## Bereavement Services

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Following the loss of a baby some parents decide to take their baby home from the hospital for a short time. This can give you the opportunity to spend time with your baby quietly and privately.

You may be able to take your baby straight home with you but if a post-mortem is required you will not be able to take your baby home until after this. You can arrange to bring your baby home after the post-mortem by contacting the bereavement support midwives. The post mortem can take up to three weeks.

### How do I take my baby home?

You can take your baby home with you from the ward or from the Bereavement viewing room. If you go home and later decide that you would like to bring your baby home, you can contact the bereavement midwives to arrange this.

In cases of neonatal death, there may be a delay in being able to take your baby home. By law, the medical examiner must have oversight of these deaths, and will need to review and sign off prior to your baby being released from the hospital. Their aim is to ensure a release can take place within 24 hours of the death.

Before you leave the hospital, you will need to sign a form stating that you are taking your baby home and will either be arranging their burial or cremation, or will be bringing them back to the hospital. You will also be given a letter to take home with you which states that your baby has been stillborn or has died shortly after birth.

You can take your baby home yourself by car if you wish, or you may want to use a funeral director (they may charge you for this service). If you take your baby home yourself you can carry him/her in your arms, use a Moses basket or, if you prefer, a casket from a funeral director or one that you have made yourself. You will need to think about how fragile your baby is when deciding this. If you are unsure, the midwives will be able to advise you.

### What happens when we are at home?

When you are home the room that your baby is in will need to be kept cool and well ventilated. If it is very hot you can hire room coolers. A funeral director can advise you about this.

You should be aware that the appearance of your baby's skin may change during this time. The midwife will discuss this with you before you leave the hospital so that you are aware of what may happen.

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When you are at home with your baby there are no rules about what you can and cannot do; you can spend the time as you choose. If you decide to take your baby to a special place, make sure you carry the letter you have been given by the hospital with you to prevent any misunderstanding.

### **How long can I take my baby home for?**

The length of time that your baby is at home with you will depend on your own wishes. Some parents have their baby home the day or night before the burial or cremation, but others need more time. There is no legal time limit for this, but it is important to remember that your baby's appearance will change.

If the hospital is arranging your baby's funeral you will need to bring him/her back to the hospital before this. If you are arranging the funeral through a funeral director they can come to your home to collect your baby. If you want your baby to be buried you also have the option of burying him/her yourself on private land. You do not need the help of a funeral director to do this but do seek advice from the owner of the land.

### **Where can I bury my baby?**

If you do not want to bury your baby in a cemetery or churchyard you may wish to bury them in a place that holds a special meaning for you, such as in a garden, farmland or woodland. If you want to do this you do not need the help of a funeral director but will need to follow these guidelines:

- Get permission from the owner of the land for burial. If you do not know who owns the land you can contact HM Land Registry to check.
- Record the date and place of burial in a formal letter which should be attached to the title deeds of the property or land.
- If you have a loan or mortgage against the property you will need to notify any company or individual who has an interest in the property. You should also be aware that the burial may deter future buyers or occupiers and affect the value of the property.
- Bury your baby in environmentally biodegradable material; plastic boxes should not be used.
- Make sure there is no danger to any water courses or supplies and no danger of any bodily products leaking into adjoining land. 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.
- You do not have to inform the Environment Agency but might want to check with them that the burial site meets their safety standards.
- Babies born before 24 weeks of pregnancy should be buried at a depth of at least 45cm. Babies who are stillborn or die shortly after birth should be buried at a depth of 1.25 metres.
- When a burial is on private land there is no guarantee that the site will not be disturbed later so you may want to seek advice from a solicitor or the coroner's office.
- If your baby was born over 24 weeks or baby died after birth (Neonatal Death), the death must be registered before any funeral can take place.

There are also privately owned woodland burial sites which you may prefer to use. You can find out more about these from the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management.

## How to contact us

If you have any more questions or need any more advice about taking your baby home, you can contact the hospital on one of the following numbers:

### Bereavement support midwife

Land line 0121 507 4395

Sadaf Ahmed 07790936306

Vicky Weaver 07817087097

### Neonatal unit

0121 507 5100

### Delivery Suite

0121 507 4184

### Mortuary

0121 507 4259

## Other useful contacts

### Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management

[www.iccm-uk.com](http://www.iccm-uk.com)

020 8989 4661

### HM Land Registry

[www.onlinelandregistry.org.uk](http://www.onlinelandregistry.org.uk)

0333 880 1108

### The Natural Death Centre

[www.naturaldeath.org.uk](http://www.naturaldeath.org.uk)

01962 712 690

All websites and links accessed 30 July 2024

## Sources of information used in this leaflet

- Sands, the stillbirth & neonatal death charity (2016). *Pregnancy loss and the death of a baby: guidelines for professionals*. Coventry: Tantamount.
- The natural death centre (2010). *Private land burial*. Available at: <http://www.naturaldeath.org.uk/index.php?page=home-burial> [Accessed 05 December 2024].

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