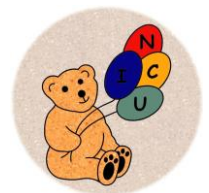


Taking your baby home following a neonatal death

Important information for patients

This leaflet is available in audio, Braille, large print and other languages. To request a copy, please telephone 01270 612284.

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- It is important to keep the baby and the room where the baby is to be kept cool. We recommend that you turn the heating off and, if necessary, use icepacks placed underneath the bottom sheet, to keep your baby cool
- The baby must not be kept in places where food stuffs are stored, such as a domestic refrigerator
- If you are burying the baby yourself, we recommend that the burial takes place within 24 hours of discharge from hospital
- If a Hospice service is involved in offering you and your family support at home, they may be able to provide a 'cuddle cot' which helps to keep your baby cool

Contact numbers

If you would like any further information, please do not hesitate to contact any of the following:

A Funeral Director

Ward 22 – Neonatal Intensive Care Unit: 01270 612284

Bereavement Manager: 01270 273882

Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Charity (SANDS) Support Helpline:
020 7436 5881

I want to take my baby home but do not know how I will feel

We hope that you feel comfortable with your decision to take your baby home. This may be an extremely emotional time and it is normal to experience a wide range of emotions. When you have taken your baby home you may find it too distressing for you or your family.

If you feel like this, please contact your funeral director straight away and they will be able to arrange to come to take the baby back to their premises, and you can still go to see your baby if you wish.

You may also consider the support of a Children's Hospice when you take your baby home. A hospice can provide support to families at home. This can range from emotional support such as collecting mementoes or supporting siblings, to the practical support such as registering your baby's death and funeral planning. Staff on the Neonatal Unit will liaise with a Hospice if this is something that you would prefer.

How should I care for my baby at home?

Caring for your baby at home is a special time for you and your family and gives you the opportunity to share some quiet time together.

The following advice will help you care for your baby in the best way possible:

- If you have other children it will help them if you talk to them and explain how the baby looks and that he or she will feel cold to touch
- Let your other children be involved as much as they or you think is enough for them
- If you have pets it is advisable to keep them in a separate room
- When somebody dies the body begins to change and it can release an odour. This is the same with babies; if this happens we recommend that you open a window, and / or you could burn scented candles, or use essential oils with or without a burner

Introduction

We are very sorry that you have experienced the loss of your baby. There are some practical decisions that you will need to make, and this leaflet is designed to help you.

Taking your baby home can seem quite frightening and parents worry about what they need to do. This can seem a very hard decision to make when you are feeling so sad.

This leaflet refers to babies that have been born alive between 24 weeks gestation and term. It explains what will happen and what you will need to do if you decide you would like to care for your baby at home before you make arrangements with a funeral director for a funeral service, or when you decide that you would like your baby to be buried on a piece of land that is not a recognised cemetery.

If you would like to talk to someone further about your decision, then please speak to the nursing or midwifery staff or alternatively you can contact the Bereavement Manager.

Bereavement Manager: Telephone 01270 273882

Are there any legal requirements I need to think about?

There is no legal reason why you cannot take your baby home, however it will not be possible if your baby is having a post mortem examination.

If your baby was born alive from 24 weeks gestation and above, you will need to register the birth and the death.

The hospital recommends that the funeral arrangements are handled by funeral directors, and the baby is buried in a cemetery or the service is held in a crematorium.

There are no specific legal requirements when thinking about burial in your own garden or other premises. The Planning and Environmental Health Office of the City Council or your local council can inform you of any by-laws or local regulations that may affect the burial.

There are a number of recommendations and points to be considered when thinking about where to bury the baby. These are:

- Danger must not be caused to others
- The burial must not interfere with the rights that others have on the land
- There must be no chance of fluids leaking into or onto adjoining land
- The burial should take place at a depth greater than 24" / 60cms
- You may want to consider including details of the burial in a garden on the deeds of the property
- The value of the property may decrease
- If the site is to be marked, consideration must be given to neighbours who might find this distressing
- You may also wish to give careful thought to having a burial in a residential garden

The main points to consider are: what would your wishes be for the grave if you were to move house, or if in the future the land were to be used for a new purpose.

How will I take my baby home?

Although it is a sad time, taking your baby home is a really important decision. Your baby is a very special part of your life.

As parents you have some choices in how you take your baby home. Babies cannot be taken home on public transport and parents sometimes feel it is hard to drive themselves. The hospital asks that you name a funeral director that you would like to use, and nursing staff will liaise with them and make arrangements for them to transport you and your baby from the hospital to your home.

Staff will talk to you about the options available to you; for example, you could take your baby home wrapped in a blanket, or if you have a Moses basket etc. A funeral director may bring your baby home in a small coffin.

If you would like to make your own transport arrangements, it is advisable that you ask a family member/friend to drive you and your baby home. The hospital will provide you with a letter explaining the situation in case you were to be stopped on your journey home. When you leave hospital a member of staff will walk with you to your car.

The hospital requires that the person who takes the baby from the hospital sign a release notification form to authorise the hospital to release your baby. If you are not able to do this, a named member of your family or your funeral director can do this for you.