

## When your baby dies

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You are entitled to a copy of any letter we write about you. Please ask if you want one when you come to the hospital.

The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email [patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk) if you would like a reference list.

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**Benson Suite 01722 425187**  
**Labour Ward 01722 425183**  
**Bereavement Suite 01722 425283**

**Chaplaincy 01722 429271**  
**(or through ward staff Switchboard**  
**and ask them to bleep duty chaplain)**

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## Agencies for further support

**SANDS** (Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society)

[www.uk-sands.org](http://www.uk-sands.org)

Helpline 020 7436 5881.

This helpline is for anyone affected by the death of a baby.

**ARC** (Antenatal Result and Choices)

[www.arc-uk.org](http://www.arc-uk.org)

Helpline 0845 0772290

ARC supports parents through antenatal testing and when an abnormality is diagnosed in their unborn baby.

**Child Bereavement Trust**

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

Phone 01494 446648

This charity provides support and information to all affected by the death of a baby or child or when children are bereaved.

**CRUSE Bereavement Care**

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

Cruise has trained people who are available to help you through your grief.

**Local Churches or Faith Groups**

Details of local sources of spiritual support are available online

## When your baby dies at Salisbury District Hospital

The hospital staff of the Maternity unit, the Bereavement Suite and the Chaplaincy team all offer you our deepest sympathy at this sad and difficult time. We are here to support you and your family in any way you need. We hope the Benson Suite accommodation will provide a safe, quiet space and some extra privacy while you are here.

This booklet is intended to help you with whatever lies ahead. It includes information about some of the practical, legal and official arrangements which have to be made, as well as offering details of sources of support both now, and later. Please ask us about anything at all; we want to help you and your family do whatever is right for you.

### The Bereavement Suite

When you are ready, your baby will be taken to the Bereavement Suite and be looked after by the staff there. You may like to give a special toy or blanket for your baby to keep with them. Or you may prefer to take these treasured items home. Once you have returned home you may wish to visit your baby again. Please call in advance to arrange an appointment, either in the Benson Suite at any time, (01722 425183) or, if you would prefer, in the Bereavement Suite for up to 1 hour, (01722 425150), during working hours (01722 425150).

## Support before and after delivery

You may have all sorts of questions. It sometimes helps to speak with someone about anything and everything. Please feel free to ask for a chaplain to come and see you. Chaplains are here for everyone, whatever your beliefs may be; their care can be religious or non-religious, according to what you would like. The chaplain will listen and explore with you whatever you need to discuss, whether practical or pastoral. Ask your midwife to contact the duty chaplain at any time, through the switchboard.

You are welcome, also, to use the Chapel (on Level 3 of the main hospital, next to the pharmacy). This is a safe and sacred space where you can just 'be' for as long as you need. It is open all day, every day and can be accessed at night with a staff ID badge; ask a member of staff to let you in.

After your baby is born you are welcome to keep your baby with you, to hold and to spend time with, for as long as you would like. If you would like other family members to visit (or not) during this time we can help with this.

Some parents find it helpful to mark the arrival of their baby in some significant way, whether with something religious or not. The hospital chaplain can assist with this: you may like to consider a Naming and/or Blessing ceremony; or the chaplain can contact your local minister or faith leader, if you prefer. Ask your midwife to contact the chaplain at any time.

Mementoes of your baby can be arranged, if you wish: some parents like to have photographs, a lock of hair, possibly, hand and foot prints or sometimes it is possible to arrange a

## Follow up appointment

You will be sent an appointment to see your consultant at approximately 6 to 8 weeks after delivery, to discuss the care received and the results of any further investigations. If a post mortem has been requested, this appointment may be delayed by up to 14 weeks.

## The future

The loss of a baby can be devastating and emotional and it may seem overwhelming at times. No one else can know exactly how you feel: each loss is individual and unique. There is no right or wrong way to grieve and each parent has to cope with the situation in their own way. You may experience a whole range of different emotions, including numbness, disbelief, anger, confusion, emptiness, guilt or relief. You may consider:

- using your own friends or family for support.
- talking to other bereaved parents. There are organisations that can put you in touch with parents who have had similar experiences.
- the hospital chaplains are available 24/7, whenever you are in hospital for any reason. Local faith communities also offer support to bereaved parents.
- speaking to your GP, midwife, health visitor or to a trained counsellor for bereavement services.

## **Hospital burial**

The funeral service is usually held at the graveside, in a local nominated cemetery, as advised at the time. If you would like to place a headstone on your baby's grave you will need to discuss the option of purchasing the Deeds for your baby's plot. Please contact the Bereavement Suite for further information.

## **No ceremony**

There is no obligation to have a ceremony of any kind if you prefer not to. The funeral director will still care for your baby and make arrangements for burial or cremation, as you wish.

## **Attending the funeral**

Some parents want to attend the funeral service; others prefer not to be there in person but want to know the date and the time of the ceremony (in this case, the chaplain or funeral director will contact you with the details, once they are known). Some parents appreciate the support of family and friends and want them to attend the service; others prefer to make the occasion a more intimate and private moment. Whatever you choose, the service is conducted in a sensitive and dignified manner, and in accordance with any expressed wishes of the parents. Do discuss this with the Chaplain and funeral director.

## **Private funeral arrangements**

If you wish to make your own arrangements, please do so, with your own choice of funeral director, who will advise and guide you as appropriate. Please be aware there may be a cost involved in this.

foot cast, depending on gestation. Please tell us if there is anything else you would like.

## **Obtaining a medical certificate of death**

If your baby dies on or after 24 weeks' pregnancy, there is a legal requirement for a medical certificate to be issued, signed by one of the doctors, in order that the death may be formally registered. Completion of the certificate may take time if the cause of death is not known and the doctor needs to discuss it with the Coroner. You will be kept informed if a Post Mortem is required.

## **Registration of death**

If a medical certificate is required, and if the Coroner is not involved, the law requires that the death is registered within 5 days, preferably by the parents and in person. However, if this is not possible, this should be discussed with the Registrar.

If it is a newborn baby and the baby's birth has not yet been registered, it is possible to register both the birth and death at the same appointment. The Bereavement Suite staff can support you in this process, if you wish.

An appointment with the Registrar can be made by telephoning 01722 438012. The Salisbury Registrar's office address is:

The Council House,  
Bourne Hill,  
Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP1 3UZ

At the appointment, the Registrar will need the following information.

- medical certificate of cause of death (if applicable)
- the child's full name, home address and date and place of birth.
- parents' full names, dates of birth, home addresses and occupations.

The Registrar will issue two copies of the death certificate, one of which should be passed to your funeral director, for the cremation or burial of your baby.

## Post mortem

You will be offered a post mortem, if appropriate. Your midwife or doctor will discuss this with you when you feel ready.

## Arranging a funeral for your baby

For many parents, the loss of their baby is unexpected. Understandably the thought of having to arrange a funeral has not been considered. We can help with this, if you would like us to. Please take time to consider what you would find most helpful and appropriate.

If you have particular religious or cultural needs or expectations, please mention them to the midwife or chaplain as soon as possible, so that we can try to accommodate them. This includes contacting a local minister or other faith leader from your own tradition.

You may choose whether you want to have your baby

cremated or buried. Whichever you choose, the relevant documentation will need to be completed before the funeral and maternity staff are available to assist you.

## Funeral options

### Hospital funeral

The hospital can arrange the funeral, if you wish, through one of our local funeral directors, with whom we liaise closely. Religious or non-religious ceremonies are available. If you choose to have some kind of service, it will normally be led by a hospital chaplain, who will discuss and plan the service with you, making it as personal and individual as possible (with music, readings etc).

### Hospital cremation

The funeral service is held in the Salisbury Crematorium Chapel, Monday to Friday, usually 8.30am or 4.45pm. The Chaplain or funeral director will liaise with the crematorium and will discuss with you the date, time and format of the service.

### Ashes

After cremation there are usually some ashes remaining. Before you leave the hospital, you will be asked to complete a form saying what you would like to happen with the ashes. If you would like them returned to you, to keep, or to make your own arrangements, you can do so through your funeral director, usually a day or two later. If you wish, however, the ashes can be scattered, by the crematorium staff, in the Garden of Remembrance.