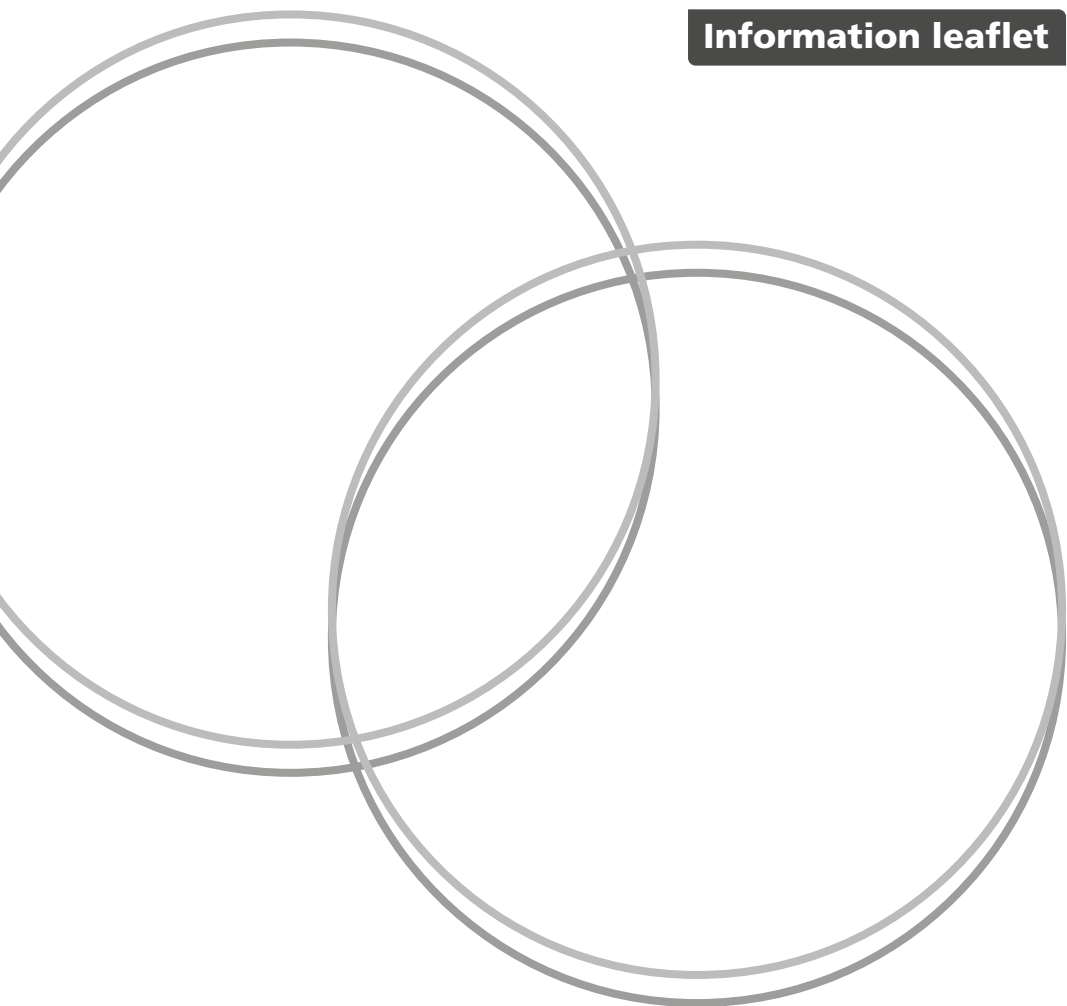




Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Advice and support following the loss of your baby What should I do now?

Information leaflet



Our condolences

We are sorry to hear that your baby has died. We hope that the following information will be helpful to you and give you support.

You may find yourself with lots of decisions to make at this time, but you do not have to face them alone. Members of the Maternity Team, Bereavement Office and Chaplaincy service can offer you support to help you through this difficult time.

This leaflet aims to explain the practical considerations that will need to be made following the loss of your baby. If you have further questions after reading this information, the bereavement team will discuss these with you.

How to contact us when you get home

If you have any questions or concerns please contact the bereavement midwifery team. If you need spiritual or pastoral support, please call the Chaplaincy Service (see the contact details below).

Bereavement Midwifery Team

Tel: **01865 227 778**

Mobile: **07770 967 383**

(Monday to Friday 8am to 4pm – an answerphone service is available)

Level 7 – Women’s Centre

Tel: **01865 221 665** or **221 894**

(Available 24 hours a day)

Bereavement Office

Tel: **01865 220 110**

(Monday to Friday 8am to 4pm)

Chaplaincy Service

Tel: **01865 857 921**

(Monday to Friday 8am to 4pm – an answerphone service is available)

Holding or seeing your baby

After your baby is born, you will be offered the opportunity to see your baby and spend time with them. Many parents have found this time to be important, as it can never be repeated. However, we understand that some parents prefer not to hold or see their baby or are not sure what to expect. Please discuss your fears or concerns with the midwife looking after you, so that we can provide you with the most helpful support and care. It is important to understand that as time passes after the birth of your baby, there will be subtle changes in your baby's condition, including changes in the colour and texture of their skin.

Photographs and mementoes

Photographs can be taken of your baby, which can include you and other members of the family. You are also welcome to take your own photographs, and we have cameras available for you to use if you wish. If you would like photographs to be taken, but don't feel that you're ready to look at them yet, we can put them on a memory stick which you can take home with you. We can also arrange a free-of-charge professional photoshoot through a charity called Remember My Baby – if this is something you would be interested in, please let the midwives know.

We have lots of other ways of helping you to make memories with your baby if you would like them. These include:

- Memory boxes
- Matching teddy bears (one for you and one for your baby)
- Hand and footprints
- Casts or imprints of your baby's hands and feet
- Certificates of Remembrance

If you would like the opportunity to discuss a blessing, a baby naming and other ways of saying goodbye to your baby, please ask the midwife looking after you to contact the hospital Chaplain. A ceremony can be religious or non-religious in accordance with your

personal wishes. Alternatively, you may wish make arrangements with your own religious adviser, or ask us to contact them on your behalf.

Book of Remembrance

A Book of Remembrance is kept on Level 7 of the Women's Centre. There is also a Book of Remembrance in the Newborn Intensive Care Unit at the John Radcliffe Hospital and in the Hospital Chapel at the Horton General Hospital.

You are welcome to make an entry in the Book of Remembrance. All entries are handwritten by scribes in beautiful calligraphy. If you would like to do this, please ask your midwife for a form to record your words of remembrance.

Entries can be submitted at any time, even months or years later.

If you would like to see the Remembrance Book, please ask a member of staff looking after you.

Taking your baby home

You may wish to spend some time with your baby at home, perhaps for a few hours or maybe for longer. We can arrange for you to take a cuddle cot home to help minimise changes to your baby's appearance while they are at home with you. If this is an option you would like to discuss further, please let your midwife know.

When you leave the hospital

If you choose not to take you baby home, we will care for your baby in the mortuary until funeral arrangements have been made. If you wish to see your baby again before the funeral, you can contact the bereavement midwifery team or your chosen Funeral Director, who will discuss arrangements for you to see your baby with you.

Post mortem examination

A postmortem is a medical examination which may help us to find out why your baby has died. We will give you further information to help you decide about whether you want a postmortem to take place.

If you have given written consent for a postmortem examination to be carried out, you can still contact a Funeral Director to start making arrangements for your baby's funeral. Your Funeral Director will contact the hospital to arrange collection of your baby.

Follow-up appointment

You will receive a hospital follow-up appointment approximately 8 to 10 weeks after the delivery of your baby. This is to allow time for all the test results to come back, and to give you time to process and think about questions you may want to ask. If you gave consent for a postmortem examination to be carried out, the hospital follow-up appointment may be made about 10 to 14 weeks after your delivery, as some of the tests involved take a little longer.

During this appointment, your consultant will discuss your test results (including the postmortem results if you gave your consent for this to happen) and give you the opportunity to ask any questions you may have about the loss of your baby.

You may find it helpful to bring a list of any questions you have to the hospital follow-up appointment. This will help us to make sure we meet your individual needs and provide you with as much information as possible.

Bereavement support

If you feel that you need further support after you have left the hospital, please speak to the bereavement midwifery team at the hospital (see page 3 for contact details).

A specialist counselling service is also available from the charity 'Petals' and you will be given their leaflet with your discharge paperwork.

Please contact them to find out more about their free counselling service:

Website: www.petalscharity.org

Tel: **0300 688 0068**

Email: counselling@petalscharity.org

Registration

The Bereavement Office can help you with this process.

If your baby died before 24 weeks' gestation

There is no legal requirement to register your baby's birth or death. However, a commemorative certificate is available from the Register Office for a small fee.

You can contact the Register Office by telephone or email.

Tel: **0345 241 2489**

Email: registeroffice@oxfordshire.gov.uk

If your baby was stillborn after 24 weeks' gestation

Soon after the birth of your baby, the midwife or doctor will complete a Medical Certificate of Stillbirth which they will give to the Bereavement Office. The Bereavement Office will then contact you to discuss the registration process and gain your consent (permission) to pass your details on to the Register Office.

The Register Office will then contact you to complete the registration of the stillbirth of your baby. You can contact the Register Office by telephone or email:

Tel: **0345 241 2489**

Email: registeroffice@oxfordshire.gov.uk

When you register the stillbirth of your baby, you can also register their name. You will then be given a small 'Certificate of Registration of Stillbirth' free of charge. There is a small charge for a full-size certificate.

You can buy additional certificates if you wish, at the time of registration or at any time afterwards.

If you are not married and wish to register your baby with their father's surname, you will both need to be present at the registration appointment.

The registrar will also arrange for a white form to be passed on to the funeral director of your choice. This will then allow the burial or cremation to take place.

If your baby was born alive and then died

If you have not yet registered your baby's birth, you will need to do so at the same time as registering their death. When booking your appointment with the Register Office, please advise them that you will need to register both the birth and death. This is because they will need to allocate more time for your appointment. If you are not married, the baby's father will also need to be present if you wish his details to be added to the registration documents.

You will be given a 'Medical Certificate of Cause of Death' by the doctor responsible for your baby's care. Please take this to the Register Office (when you go for your appointment) to register your baby's death. This should be done within 5 working days. During the pandemic, we are taking the certificate directly to the Bereavement Office, for it to be sent electronically to the Registrar.

You can contact the Register Office by telephone or email:

Tel: **0345 241 2489**

Email: **registeroffice@oxfordshire.gov.uk**

A small fee is charged for the certified copy of the birth and death certificates.

The Registrar will give you a green form to pass on to the Funeral Director of your choice. This will then allow the burial or cremation to take place.

Funeral services

Funerals do not need to be formal or religious. If you want to discuss alternative options and ideas, the members of the midwifery team or Bereavement Office will be able to support you.

If your baby was born before 24 weeks gestation and died before birth, the hospital can offer a simple communal funeral, which you are able to attend.

A funeral can be an important way of saying goodbye to your baby. It can also help your family and friends to show you their support at this very difficult time.

You may feel that you need longer to make this decision. If so, please call the Bereavement Office and they will direct you to the appropriate service. Please ask the midwife looking after you to contact the chaplain if you would like to discuss this further.

You may decide that you simply want your baby's body to be respectfully buried by the hospital. You may not want further discussion or a formal service. If you would like to know afterwards what was said and how the service was carried out, you can call the Chaplaincy Service on:

Tel: **01865 857 921**

(an answerphone service is available)

Oxfordshire Cemeteries offer burial for babies who were delivered at both the John Radcliffe Hospital and Horton General Hospital.

Can I talk with someone about the funeral if I am unsure of what decision to make?

At this very difficult time, we can assure you that we are here to help and give you support in any way we can. We are available to come and talk with you whilst you are in hospital and also over the telephone when you have returned home.

Does the funeral service have to be religious?

The Chaplains are experienced in taking informal services that are sensitive to your religious or non-religious preferences.

Hospital burial arrangements

A burial service for babies born deceased (who have died) before 24 weeks gestation is held at the Headington Cemetery on the first Thursday of every month at 9.30am. To give you time to consider the funeral arrangements you wish to have, it will normally be held at least three to six weeks after your baby was born.

Please let the Bereavement Office know within two weeks of the birth if you would like to attend.

Tel: **01865 220 110**

(Monday to Friday 8am to 4pm – an answerphone service is available outside of these times)

The burial takes place in a shared grave near the SANDS (Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society) memorial. This is in the lower part of Headington Cemetery, close to the John Radcliffe Hospital.

On the day of the funeral, your baby will be placed in a small white coffin and then carefully placed in the grave just before you arrive. A number of babies may also be buried at the same time, and several other parents may be present. Shortly after the service, the grave will be made secure. When the final funeral has taken place for this grave, it will be turfed.

As the grave is shared, it is not possible to have a permanent grave marker or headstone, but you can buy a plaque to be placed in the SANDS garden.

If you wish to make your own private funeral arrangements, the Bereavement Midwifery Team will discuss this with you. please discuss this with the Bereavement Midwifery Team.

Funerals for babies stillborn after 24 weeks' gestation or who died after birth

Unfortunately, the hospital is unable to make funeral arrangements for babies who are stillborn after 24 weeks' gestation, or who were born alive but died after birth. However, we are available to assist you to make choices that you feel are right for you and your family. You can choose to have a burial in a churchyard, with the permission of the church, or in a council or private cemetery. There are costs associated with the preparation of the grave and the rights to place a headstone – these can be significant. Local Funeral Directors will be able to advise you on the exact costs.

Crematoriums do not normally charge for the cremation of babies. However, when considering cremation, it is important to be aware that there is a possibility that there will be little or no cremated remains.

Do I need to use a funeral director?

A funeral director will be able to take care of all the arrangements for your baby's funeral. They can help you to plan as little or as much as you are able to do. Most funeral directors do not charge for their advice. They will encourage you to discuss your wishes and concerns with them before they take any formal instructions to proceed with the funeral arrangements.

A list of your local funeral directors is available from the Bereavement and Chaplaincy Service, if required. The Multi Faith Chaplaincy Service can also advise about religious needs, such as early burial arrangements of babies from Muslim families.

If you are receiving certain benefits, you may be eligible for help with funeral costs. Please ask the Bereavement Office for information about this.

How will my baby be dressed?

Your baby can remain in the clothing provided by the hospital, or you can dress them in clothes of your own choice. Funeral Directors will advise you if certain clothing cannot be used for cremation.

Can anything be put in the coffin with my baby?

If your baby is to be buried, then most items can be placed inside the coffin with them.

If you have decided on cremation, cards, photographs or small soft toys may be placed with your baby (jewellery or glass cannot be cremated).

When can the funeral take place?

Funeral Directors will do their best to accommodate your preferred date and time for the funeral. If a postmortem examination is being performed, it is advisable that you do not fix a date for the funeral until the Funeral Director has been told that your baby is ready for collection from the hospital.

Support groups and organisations

Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society (SANDS)

Helpline: 0207 436 5881

Email: helpline@uk-sands.org

Website: www.uk-sands.org

Oxfordshire SANDS:

Email: oxfordshiresands@org.uk

Petals Counselling Charity

Helpline: 0300 688 0068

Email: counselling@petalscharity.org

Website: www.petalscharity.org

Twins and Multiple Births Association, Bereavement Support Group (TAMBA)

Helpline: 0800 138 0509

Email: support-team@tamba.org.uk

Website: www.tamba.org.uk/bereavement

The Miscarriage Association

Helpline: 01924 200 799

Email: info@miscarriageassociation.org.uk

Website: www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk

Birth Trauma Association

Website: www.birthtraumaassociation.org.uk

Antenatal Results and Choices (ARC)

Support and information for parents whose baby has died following abnormal antenatal test results.

Helpline: 0845 077 2290 or
0207 713 7486 (from mobile)

Website: www.arc-uk.org/

SeeSaw

SeeSaw provides grief support for bereaved children and young people throughout Oxfordshire.

Helpline: **01865 744 768**

Email: **info@seesaw.org.uk**

Website: **www.seesaw.org.uk**

Child Bereavement UK

Support for parents and children after a death within the family.

Helpline: **0800 02 888 40**

Tel: **01494 568 900**

Email: **support@childbereavementuk.org**

Website: **www.childbereavementuk.org**

Naya's Wish

Charity providing support to older siblings of babies who have died

Email: **kirsty@nayaswish.com**

National website: **https://www.nayaswish.com/**

Daisy's dream

Tel: **01189 342 604**

Website: **www.daisysdream.org.uk**

Cruse Bereavement Care

National Helpline: **0808 808 1677**

Email: **helpline@crusebereavementcare.org.uk** National

website: **www.cruse.org.uk**

Oxfordshire and West Berkshire Cruse:

Helplines:

Oxford **01865 245 398**

Banbury **01295 266 350**

West Berkshire **01635 523 573**

Email: **oxfordshire@cruse.org.uk**

wbc.admin@hotmail.co.uk

Websites: **www.oxfordcruse.co.uk**

www.crusewestberks.org

Reading Lifeline

Counselling and support.

Tel: **01189 596 669** or

07544 177 816

Email: **lifeline@themustardtree.org**

Website: **www.themustardtree.org/lifeline**

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

We would like to thank the Oxford Maternity Voices Partnership for their contribution in the development of this leaflet.

Author: This leaflet has been produced by the Bereavement Office, Chaplaincy service and the Bereavement Midwifery Team.

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Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

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