

John Radcliffe and Horton General Hospitals

What should I do now?

Advice and support,
following the loss of your baby



Our condolences

We are sorry to hear of the death of your baby. 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 Bereavement Centre and Chaplaincy service can offer you support to help you through this difficult time.

This leaflet aims to explain the practical things which need to happen. Please do ask if you have further questions which need to be answered.

How to contact us when you get home

If you need spiritual or pastoral support, please call the Chaplaincy service. For all other enquiries, please call the Bereavement Centre. They will be able to put you in touch with the department that you need.

Bereavement Centre

Tel: **01295 229 386**

(7.00am to 3.00pm, Monday to Friday (answerphone service available))

Chaplaincy Service

Tel: **01865 857 921**

(answerphone service available)

Bereavement Specialist Midwife

Tel: **01865 227 778**

Mobile: **07770 967 383**

Level 7, Women's Centre

Tel: **01865 221 665**

Holding or seeing your baby

After the delivery of your baby you will be offered the opportunity of holding them and taking all the time that you need to be 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.

Photographs and mementoes

Photographs can be taken of your baby, which can include you and other members of the family. 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.

If you would like the opportunity to discuss a blessing, naming ceremony and ways of saying goodbye to your baby, please ask the midwife looking after you to contact the hospital Chaplain. Alternatively, if you have your own religious adviser, we can contact them on your behalf.

Book of Remembrance

You are welcome to make an entry in the Book of Remembrance. If you would like to do this, please ask your midwife for a form to record your words 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.

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.

When you leave the hospital

Your baby can be cared for by the hospital until the funeral arrangements have been made. If you wish to see your baby again before the funeral, you can contact the hospital or Funeral Director, who will discuss viewing arrangements with you.

You may be anxious about leaving your baby in hospital or may feel that you want to take them home. Please speak with your midwife about any worries you have and the options that may be available, including the special 'cuddle cot'.

Post mortem examination

A post mortem 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 make a decision about whether you want a post mortem to take place.

If you have given written consent for a post mortem examination to be carried out, you can still contact a Funeral Director to start to make arrangements for your baby's funeral. You and your Funeral Director will be advised when your baby's body can be released to them.

Follow-up appointment

You will receive a hospital follow-up appointment approximately 8 to 10 weeks after the delivery of your baby. If you had a post mortem examination carried out, the appointment may be made about 10-14 weeks after your delivery. This appointment will give you the opportunity to ask any questions you may have about the loss of your baby.

You will also receive the results of the post mortem examination at this appointment, if one was carried out.

It may help to make a list of questions you might have, before you come to the appointment. This will help us to give you 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 Specialist Midwife at the hospital (see page 4 for contact details).

A specialist counselling service is also available from the charity 'Petals'.

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 Centre 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 Registration Service for a small fee.

You can contact the Registration Service 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 delivery of your baby, you will be given a Medical Certificate of Stillbirth by your doctor or midwife. You will need to take this document to register the stillbirth of your baby. It may be possible for you to do this at the hospital, or you can make an appointment to go to the Oxfordshire Registration Office nearest to your home.

You can contact the Registration Service 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 to each other and wish to register your baby with their father's surname, you will need to go to the Registration Office together.

The Registrar will also give you a white form to pass 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. 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 Registration Office to register your baby's death within five working days. It may be possible for you to do this at the hospital or you can make an appointment to go to the Oxfordshire Registration Office nearest to your home. You can make this appointment yourself, if it has not already been arranged by the Bereavement Centre or Chaplaincy service.

You can contact the Registration Service 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 Bereavement Centre will be happy to give you support.

Funerals for babies born under 24 weeks' gestation

The hospital can offer a simple funeral for your baby.

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 emotional time.

The Bereavement Centre is available to give you support and can give you advice about funeral services or other options available.

You may feel that you need longer to make this decision. If so, please call the Bereavement Centre 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.

Tel: **01865 857 921**
(answerphone service 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 before 24 weeks gestation is held at the Headington Cemetery on the first Thursday of each month at 9.30am. In order 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 delivered.

You are welcome to come to this service. Please let the Bereavement Centre know within two weeks of your delivery if you would like to come.

Tel: **01295 229 386**

(Monday to Friday, 7.00am to 3.00pm (answerphone service available))

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.

Funerals for babies born after 24 weeks' gestation

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.

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).

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 Centre for information about this.

If you wish to make your own private funeral arrangements, please contact the Bereavement Centre for more information.

When can the funeral take place?

Funeral Directors will do their best to accommodate your preferred date and time for the funeral. If a post mortem 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

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

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

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

If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221 473** or email **PALS@ouh.nhs.uk**

This leaflet has been produced by the Bereavement Centre, Chaplaincy service and the Bereavement Midwives.

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Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

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www.ouh.nhs.uk/information

