PRACTICAL RESOURCES

If Your Baby Has Died

A practical guide for the days and weeks ahead.



FELIX'S FLAME CIC

A NOTE BEFORE WE BEGIN

If your baby has died, you may be facing things you never imagined you would have to think about. There can be so much to take in — decisions about your baby, your own physical recovery, paperwork, appointments and what happens next — all while trying to make sense of a loss that can feel impossible to comprehend.

You don't need to have all the answers right now.

This guide has been created to gently walk you through some of the practical things you may encounter in the days and weeks after your baby's death. You can take from it what feels useful, come back to it when you're ready, and leave anything that doesn't feel right for you.

There is no one way to do this.

CONTENTS

01 — The first few days
02 — Spending time with your baby
03 — Your body after birth
04 — Leaving hospital without your baby
05 — The practical things that may come next
06 — Your emotional wellbeing
07 — Your questions and your care
08 — Looking ahead
09 — Finding support
10 — Words of support

There is no need to read everything at once.
Focus on what you need one step at a time.

THE FIRST FEW DAYS

You may be surrounded by people asking questions, explaining things and asking you to make decisions when all you want is for this not to be happening.

Some people want to know everything straight away. Others cannot take much information in at all. You might move between the two.

There is no right way to get through these first days. Your maternity or bereavement team should explain what needs to happen and give you time to ask questions. If you are unsure about something, **it is okay to ask them to explain it again.**

You can ask:

- What needs to happen now?
- What can wait until later?
- Who will support us while we are here?
- Who can we contact when we go home?

If you have a partner, family member or friend with you, you may want them to help listen, take notes or remember questions for you.

SPENDING TIME WITH YOUR BABY

If you are able to spend time with your baby, you may be offered different choices about how you would like that time to look.

For some families, being able to see, hold and spend time with their baby becomes an incredibly important part of saying goodbye. For others, it may feel too difficult. Both responses are okay.

You might want to think about:

- Holding or seeing your baby
- Taking photographs or videos
- Handprints or footprints
- Naming your baby
- Keeping a lock of hair or another small keepsake
- Spending time together as a family
- Cultural, religious or personal wishes

You can ask your maternity or bereavement team what is available. You don't have to make every decision immediately.

If you weren't able to spend time with your baby, or you weren't offered the opportunity, you may carry difficult feelings about that. It is not too late to create memories in other ways. Our Making Memories guide explores some of these possibilities.

YOUR BODY

Your body has been through pregnancy and birth, even though you haven't brought your baby home. Depending on how far along your pregnancy was and how your baby was born, your recovery may look different from someone else's.
You might experience bleeding, abdominal or pelvic pain, tiredness, breast changes or other physical symptoms in the days and weeks afterwards.

Bleeding
Bleeding after birth is normal and can continue for several weeks. It is usually heavier at first before gradually becoming lighter and changing colour. Maternity or period pads are generally recommended rather than tampons during this time.

Pain and recovery
You may have abdominal or pelvic discomfort, soreness from stitches or tearing, tiredness, or pain following a caesarean birth. Recovery is different for everyone, so tell your maternity team or GP if something doesn't feel right.

Your breasts and milk
Your breasts may become tender or produce colostrum or milk even though your baby has died. This can be incredibly difficult to experience.
Your midwife or doctor can talk through your options, including ways to reduce or stop milk production or allowing it to happen naturally. There is no right or wrong choice.

Your body deserves care too. It has been through something significant, and recovery takes time.

LEAVING HOSPITAL

Leaving hospital without your baby can be one of the hardest moments you will ever face.

You may have to walk past rooms, families and newborn babies while you are leaving empty-handed. You may feel completely unprepared to go home.

Before you leave, ask who you can contact if you have questions or become worried about your physical or emotional wellbeing.

You may have follow-up appointments with your maternity or bereavement team. These can include checking how your body is recovering and talking through tests, investigations or results.

You may also be given information about:

- Registering your baby's death, where applicable
- Funeral, burial or cremation arrangements
- Tests, investigations or post-mortem results
- Bereavement support
- Your physical recovery
- Future appointments and who to contact

If you are given lots of information, ask for it in writing. It is completely understandable if you cannot remember everything.

There can be so much practical stuff to deal with after your baby dies. It can feel incredibly unfair that you have to make decisions and complete paperwork while you are grieving.

You do not have to understand everything at once. Where possible, take things one step at a time and ask someone you trust to help.

Registering your baby's death
The process depends on the type and timing of the loss. Your maternity or bereavement team should explain what applies to you and what you need to do.

Funeral, burial or cremation arrangements
You may need to make decisions about arrangements for your baby. Your hospital, bereavement service or funeral director can explain the options available to you. In the UK most funeral directors do not charge for funerals for babies.

Trying to understand why your baby died
One of the hardest things after losing a baby can be not knowing why it happened. You may be offered tests or investigations to try to understand what happened.

It can be overwhelming to take this in when you are already grieving. You can ask your maternity team to explain. You can find detailed information on how to raise concerns about your pregnancy care in our If something went wrong guide.

You don't have to understand everything at once. It's okay to ask questions, ask someone to be with you, or come back to something another day.

YOUR EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

You might cry constantly. You might feel numb. You might feel angry, lost, guilty or completely exhausted. You might have moments where you laugh or feel okay, and then feel guilty for doing so.

None of this means you loved your baby any less.

Grief can change from hour to hour, day to day and year to year. There may be days when getting dressed or brushing your teeth feels like an achievement. There may be days when you manage more than you expected.

You do not have to wait until you are struggling badly before asking for support.

Your GP, maternity or bereavement team, or a specialist baby-loss or perinatal mental health organisation can help you find the right support.

If you feel unable to keep yourself safe or think you may act on thoughts of harming yourself, please seek urgent help through emergency services or an appropriate crisis service.

You can also visit the Felix's Flame Support & Signposting page to find specialist organisations.

YOUR QUESTIONS AND YOUR CARE

After a baby dies, you may have questions about what happened, the care you received or decisions that were made.

Sometimes the questions don't arrive straight away. You might think of something weeks or months later and wish you had asked about it sooner.

You do not need to know exactly what went wrong before asking questions.

You can ask your maternity or bereavement team to explain what happened, request information about your care and ask who can help you understand your records or any investigation.

If you have concerns about your maternity care, there are different ways you may be able to raise them. Our When Something Went Wrong guide looks at medical records, concerns, complaints and investigations in more detail.

Your questions matter. You deserve clear information and the opportunity to understand what happened to you and your baby.

LOOKING AHEAD

Right now, looking ahead may feel impossible.

You don't need to know what comes next. You don't need to have a plan for your grief, your future or another pregnancy.

For now, getting through today may be enough.

Over time, you may have questions about your health, fertility, future pregnancies or what life looks like after your loss. You can have those conversations when you feel ready.

There is no timeline for grief.

WORDS OF SUPPORT

This guide has been created to offer practical information and signposting. It is not intended to replace individual medical advice. Below I've asked some parents who have been in your shoes for their advice on the early days, I hope they bring some comfort.

Don’t try to conquer the whole day at once. It can feel overwhelming. Just focus on the next hour, and sometimes, the next five minutes. 🤍

Otis’ Mama xx

Take all the time you need and say their name often 🤍

Florence's Mama xx

My advice would be - don’t be afraid to ask the hospital to make things feel less clinical. Your baby wasn’t just a patient, they were your baby - and this is a really important time to make forever memories with them. You can ask staff to use their name. Ask them to talk about them as a baby rather than “the baby”. Ask for privacy, a quieter room. Ask for time. Ask whether you can spend time with them without staff constantly coming in. Good bereavement care includes recognising parenthood, sensitive communication and enabling informed choices 💛

Taylor's Mum xx

WORDS OF SUPPORT

"It's okay not to be okay you're allowed to feel all the feelings so if you need to cry in a dark room today, do it. If you need to look at photos or avoid photos that's okay too. If you need to scream into a pillow, do it. If you need to keep a routine to feel normal, do it. There is no guidebook on what gets you through this grief. Just do whatever gets you through each day." - **Aspen's Mum xxx**

"Losing your baby is losing a whole future. Regardless of the stage you say goodbye to them, your grief is real and valid. And accept and ask for any memory making you can have. Even if you never look at it, at least you have the option" - **Sarah xxx**

"Losing your baby is one of the toughest, if not the toughest loss to experience. Don't listen to anyone telling you what you should and shouldn't be doing and don't pressure yourself to process your babies loss. It takes time and it's different for everybody. If keeping busy helps you, do that. If smashing plates helps you with that, then do it. Nobody is a grief expert and everyones journey is their own. There is no rush" - **Reggie's Mum xxx**

WORDS OF SUPPORT

"Find people who can sit with you in your grief and aren't afraid to say your babies name. Speak about your baby, write to your bab, create rituals that help you feel closer to them. Get outside as much as you can - Nature is a great antidote to feed." - **Rowans Mum xxx**

Be gentle with yourself. There is no right way to grieve. No timeline, no set of rules, and no expectation that you should feel a certain way at a certain point. Do what feels right for you. Say your baby's or babies name. Talk about them. Be quiet if you need to. Celebrate them. Cry. Laugh. Go out, or stay home. Ask for support, or take some time for yourself. Some days you may feel like you're coping, and other days you may not. That's okay too. You don't have to make your grief easier for other people to understand. - **Sharon xxx**