

Information for patients

Introduction

In this document we will use the word 'baby' when referring to your baby / fetus or fetal tissue.

This leaflet will help you have a better understanding of what happens to your baby after your loss and explains the choices you have with regard to tests and funeral arrangements.

Unfortunately, you will need to make some difficult choices with regards to testing and funeral arrangements for your baby. We will need you to sign a consent form once you have made your decision.

We realize that this is a very difficult and distressing time for you. Therefore, in addition to this leaflet there will be the opportunity for you to speak with ward staff or with one of the hospital chaplains who can explain this process further and offer you support.

What happens to your baby?

Many parents worry about what will happen to their baby following a pregnancy loss. All our staff are trained to support you at this difficult time. We aim to treat your baby with dignity & respect at all times.

We will support you if you wish to see and hold your baby. Mementoes such as scan photo's, memory boxes or photographs may be available. Further information will be available from the nurse looking after you.

Once you have been discharged from hospital and any test samples have been obtained, your baby will be taken to the hospital mortuary where your baby will be kept until the time for the funeral.

Investigations and Consent for Examination

Unfortunately it is often not possible for us to tell you why you have lost your baby, even after tests have been performed. The following paragraph explains more about testing options on the baby's remains following a pregnancy loss.

Staff will explain the options for testing to you and ask you to sign a consent form once you have made your decision. We are unable to perform any testing on your baby without your written consent.

Histology Testing

This test is sometimes offered following a miscarriage or ectopic pregnancy. Unfortunately, this test will not tell us why you have lost your baby. The test is performed to confirm that the tissue that you have passed or tissue removed at the time of surgery is definitely pregnancy tissue. It is also tested to exclude a rare form of miscarriage called hydatidiform mole.

The test involves a small piece of pregnancy tissue being dissected, stained with chemicals and closely examined under a microscope. This sample is stored on a glass slide and needs to be retained for several years as part of your medical record.

Information for patients

Any remaining tissue will be returned to the hospital mortuary to be disposed of in a sensitive manner in line with your wishes. Sometimes there will be no remaining pregnancy tissue on completion of this test.

It can take up to 3 weeks for us to receive these test results. Most of the time, the result will be normal. You will only be contacted about these results if we are concerned you may need further investigation or treatment.

Genetic Testing

Genetic testing is only offered in rare circumstances such as late miscarriage, recurrent miscarriage (3 or more miscarriages in a row) or if a genetic abnormality is suspected. The decision to undertake genetic testing should be discussed in detail with your Consultant.

Genetic testing will not tell us why you have miscarried but it may identify if the baby had a genetic abnormality. The test can usually be done on a small piece of placental tissue. However, if placental tissue is not available, it may be necessary to sample a small piece of the baby's skin. This testing is undertaken at a specialist laboratory at Sheffield Women's Hospital. It may take several weeks for the results to be made available.

Any remaining tissue will be returned to the hospital mortuary to be disposed of in a sensitive manner in line with your wishes.

Post Mortem Examination

Post mortem examination is only offered in rare circumstances of late miscarriage or termination of pregnancy for fetal abnormality. The decision to undertake a post mortem examination will be discussed in detail with your Consultant and you will be asked to sign a separate consent form.

If you have consented to a post mortem examination or detailed examination of your baby, a pathologist in Sheffield will perform the examination.

If an examination or post mortem examination is required, there may be a delay in the funeral taking place as it takes up to 2 – 3 weeks for the baby to be returned to the hospital mortuary. It can take up to 12 weeks for the hospital to receive results of the post mortem examination. However, your initial plans can be discussed with the Chaplain as soon as you are ready and before the results are available.

Any remaining tissue will eventually be returned to the hospital mortuary to be disposed of in a sensitive manner in line with your wishes.

Funeral Arrangements

There are several funeral arrangement options available to you as described below. These options will be discussed with you by your nurse, midwife or doctor. You will be asked to sign a consent form on your preferred choice once you have made your decision. A Hospital Chaplain can also be available to help you with this decision.

Information for patients

Shared Cremation

Shared cremations are arranged and paid for by the hospital on your behalf.

The baby will be individually identified and placed in an enclosed box.

Cremation of your baby will take place at the same time as other baby cremations at your local crematorium. Prayers of committal will be said before the cremation.

Sadly, it is not possible to retrieve any ashes for your individual baby following a shared cremation. However, any cremated remains are scattered in a dignified manner in a memorial garden at the respective cemeteries. At Grimsby crematorium, the baby memorial area is in Plot O. At Scunthorpe, ashes are scattered around a special memorial stone in the baby memorial garden.

Should you have any further questions about shared cremation please contact the Hospital Chaplaincy service on the following number: **03033 302489**

Individual Cremation arranged by the Hospital

It may be possible to make arrangements for an individual cremation for your baby via the Hospital Chaplain or a spiritual advisor of your choice. There may be costs incurred for parents if individual cremation is requested. At Grimsby, you will also need to arrange the services of a funeral director to organize an individual cremation. The Hospital Chaplain is the best person to help you with these arrangements.

It should be possible for any remaining ashes to be returned to the parents following individual cremation. The hospital chaplain will be able to advise you on this. Alternatively, cremated remains are scattered in a dignified manner in a memorial garden at the respective cemeteries. At Grimsby crematorium, the baby memorial area is in Plot O. At Scunthorpe, ashes are scattered around a special memorial stone in the baby memorial garden.

At Scunthorpe, individual cremations are carried out on Thursday mornings before 9.00am. The Hospital Chaplain performs a short service.

There is no set day for individual cremations in Grimsby. The Hospital Chaplain and your funeral director will be able to liaise with you about the date and time of the cremation service.

Should you have any further questions about individual cremation please contact the Hospital Chaplaincy service on the following number: **03033 302489**

Individual Burial Arranged by the Hospital

Unfortunately, it is not usually possible for the hospital to make arrangements for a burial for your baby unless you request this for specific cultural reasons. It is likely that a burial will incur a charge that you will have to carry. The Hospital Chaplain is best placed to advise you about this.

Alternatively, you may wish to make contact with a local funeral director, who will then help you to make decisions about what type of service you would like. You will need to discuss what the service and burial will cost, and you will be liable for these expenses.

Information for patients

Should you have any further questions about individual burial please contact your own religious advisor or the Hospital Chaplaincy service on the following number: **03033 302489**

Private Cremation or Burial via an Undertaker

It is possible to make arrangements for an individual cremation or burial for your baby via an undertaker of your choice. Some funeral directors provide this service for free but costs may be incurred depending on your individual requirements. The Hospital Chaplain is the best person to help you with these arrangements and can be contacted via the following number: **03033 302489**

Alternatively, you may wish to contact your own religious advisor or funeral director directly:

Home Burials

Careful thought must be given when considering a burial at home. For example, you will need to consider what would happen if you moved house, or if the land is used for a new purpose in the future. Written permission must be obtained from the landowner if you do not own the land where a burial is to take place.

If you are collecting your baby yourself you must remember to bring a suitable container with you. Small caskets are available from your local undertaker or may be available from the Gynaecology Ward. Collection must be made by prior arrangement with the mortuary staff.

SANDS guidelines recommend that for burial of a baby under 24 weeks gestation the grave is at a depth of at least 18 inches (45 cms). The grave also **must not**:

- Cause any dangers to others
- Interfere with any rights other people may have on the land
- Be a danger to water supplies or watercourses.

There must also be no chance of bodily fluids leaking into or onto adjoining land.

Afterwards

You may find that it is difficult to think things through at the moment. This can be normal after losing a baby. After a few months or even a couple of years you may begin to want to talk about what has happened. You are welcome to phone the Chaplaincy Department to arrange to see the Chaplain, or you may like to join a baby loss support group. The Chaplains will be able to give you more details of these. The Bereavement Midwife may also be able to offer support

Please contact your Nurse or Midwife, Bereavement Midwife or Hospital Chaplain if you have any further questions or if you need further support.

We welcome your comments on the service that we offer. If you have any comments for suggestions please speak to your Nurse, Midwife, Bereavement Midwife or Hospital Chaplain.

Information for patients

Local Support Group Information

Grimsby & Cleethorpes SANDS (Stillbirth & Neonatal Death Society)

The group is for anyone whose baby has died during pregnancy, at birth or soon after birth. This is a local support group offering emotional support, comfort and information for bereaved parents, family and friends to meet with others who have been through a similar experience.

The support group meets between 19:30 -21:30 on the first Wednesday of every month at Holiday Inn Express, 3-9 Wellowgate, Grimsby, DN32 0RA

Local helpline: 07548 355913

Email: GrimsbyCleethorpes@sands.org.uk

Facebook: Facebook.com/Grimsbycleesands

National Support Groups

Ectopic Support Group

The Ectopic Pregnancy Trust

C/o 2nd Floor

Golden Jubilee Wing

King's College Hospital

Denmark Hill

London

SE5 9RS

Tel: 020 77332653

E-mail: ept@ectopic.org.uk

The Miscarriage Association

C/o Clayton Hospital

Northgate

Wakefield

West Yorkshire WF1 3JS

Telephone: 01924 200799 (Mon-Fri 9am to 4pm)

Fax: 01924 298334

www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk

SANDS (Stillbirth & Neonatal Death Society)

28 Portland Place,

London

W1B 1LY

Tel: 0808 164 3332

<https://www.uk-sands.org/>

Information for patients

Useful Telephone Numbers:

Bereavement Midwife

03033 302509 or mobile 07525 906939 or email: Kerry.nicola@nhs.net

Chaplaincy

03033 302489

Hospital Mortuary (Grimsby)

03033 304591

Hospital Mortuary (Scunthorpe)

03033 302230

SANDS (Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society)

Helpline – 0207 436 5881

The Miscarriage Association Helpline

01924 200 7999

Compassionate Friends Helpline

0117 953 9639

Ectopic Pregnancy Trust

01895 238 025

References

Human Tissue Act 2004

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/30/contents>

Accessed 24/05/18

Human Tissue Authority 2009 Codes of Practice.

<http://www.hta.gov.uk/legislationpoliciesandcodesofpractice/codesofpractice.cfm>

Accessed 24/05/18

Royal College of Nursing 2007 Sensitive disposal of all fetal remains: guidelines for nurses and midwives London, RCN.

http://www.rcn.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0020/78500/001248.pdf

Accessed 24/05/18

Stillbirth & Neonatal Death Society (2007) Pregnancy loss & the death of a baby: Guidelines for Professionals.

Any Comments, Compliments, Concerns or Complaints

If you have any other concerns please talk to your nurse, therapist or doctor. Our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) are available on 03033 306518 (Grimsby, Scunthorpe and Goole). You can also contact nlg-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Information for patients

As a Trust we value equality of access to our information and services, therefore alternative formats available on request at nlg-tr.interpreters@nhs.net

Date of Issue: November, 2018

Review Period: June, 2021

Author: Gynaecology Advanced Nurse Practitioner

IFP-0862 v1.2

© NLGFT 2018

