

What Happens Now?

Practical advice and guidance following an Early Neonatal Death



The death of a baby can be an unexpected and devastating experience. The effects of grief can be overwhelming, and it can be hard to take in information, to make decisions or to imagine how you are going to cope. You may feel overwhelmed and frightened by the intensity of your emotional and physical pain. The staff caring for you understand that this is a difficult time for you and want to help support you through what happens next. This booklet has been written to support you in making the decisions that are right for you, your baby and your family. If anything is unclear, please do not hesitate to ask a member of staff caring for you.

What is an early neonatal death?

A neonatal death is the death of a baby who was born alive and dies within the first 28 days of life. If the baby dies in the 1st 7 days after he or she was born, it is known as an early neonatal death.

Why does an early neonatal death happen?

The most common reason why a baby dies soon after birth is because they were born very early. Other reasons include infections or abnormalities in the baby, babies who are born very small at birth and health problems which developed during the pregnancy, labour or birth.

Following the birth of your baby, you will be offered investigations to try and determine what caused the death. These may include blood tests and swabs, detailed examination of the placenta (afterbirth), genetic testing on the baby and if you wish, a post-mortem examination. investigations on the placenta (afterbirth), genetic testing on the baby and if you wish, a post-mortem examination. We offer 2 types of post-mortem examination, and these will be discussed with you during your stay. You can choose to have as many or as few tests as you wish.

My stay in hospital?

You will usually be cared for in your own room on the Labour Ward at Calderdale Royal hospital. The staff caring for you and your family understand that this is a difficult time and are there to support and care for you and answer any questions that you may have. Family members and friends are welcome to visit you during your time in hospital. Facilities are available to make hot drinks and for someone to stay with you overnight.

What may I need during my hospital stay?

Each family is different and your length of stay in hospital will be dependent on your physical wellbeing and how you feel after the birth. Some families wish to go home a few hours after their baby dies, others prefer to stay with their baby for a few days. We suggest that you have an overnight bag with toiletries, nightwear, a change of clothes and plenty of underwear, sanitary towels and breast pads. You may wish to have something to read, some light snacks and drinks and a camera or mobile phone if you want to take your own photographs of baby. If you have any clothes, blankets or special items which you want to leave with your baby, you are welcome to bring these. We have lots of clothes in varying sizes, burial gowns, cardigans, hats and blankets which you are welcome to use.

After the Birth

Can I see/hold/touch my baby?

It can be a daunting experience seeing your baby for the first time. The staff caring for you will support you to see, touch and hold your baby if you want to and make memories for you to take home. These include hand and footprints, casts and photographs and the opportunity to have a lock of hair, your baby's name band and cot card. You are welcome to bring your own camera, and photographs can be taken with you and other family members. Your baby can be washed and dressed in any clothes that you provide and any blankets, teddies, family photographs can stay with baby once you leave the hospital. We can provide you with a Memory Box and we have tiny clothes, nappies, blankets and wraps which you are welcome to use and then take home with you.

We aim to accommodate any other requests you may have about how your baby is cared for and can assist you with any other memories you wish to make.

We have links with the charity 'Remember my Baby' who can attend the hospital and offer a specialised bereavement photography service for you and your family.

We can also provide Aching Arms bears, Lexi Dolls and memory candles which you are welcome to take home with you.

We have Ibraheems' Gift packs for families of the Muslim Faith who do not want any traditional memory making and can provide white cloth for shrouding of baby before burial.

The time you have with your baby is very precious and you may stay with him or her for as long as you wish. We have a cold cot (Abi cot) and special cooling mattresses available which allow your baby to remain with you for the entirety of your stay if this is your preference.

If you do not wish to see or hold your baby, you will not be pressurised into doing so, and the taking of any mementoes will be with your consent.

Can my baby be blessed?

The Chaplaincy staff are available to offer comfort and support you, regardless of whether you have a faith or not. You may wish your baby to be welcomed, named and /or blessed during your stay in the Hospital and we aim to facilitate this depending on the availability of the pastoral team. Your own minister is welcome to attend. For those of the Islamic faith we have Muslim chaplains (male or female) who can offer support.

Will I get a Certificate for my baby?

Because your baby was born alive, both the birth and death need to be registered at the Registry Office, even if they were alive only for a very short period. Following the death, the staff will notify the Medical Examiner, an independent senior Doctor who will review your baby's death and ensure the correct documentation is issued and a death certificate signed. They will ask permission to review your notes, and you will have written information about what happens. When the review is complete, the completed Death Certificate will be sent to the Registry Office, and they will contact you with an appointment to register the birth and the death of your baby.

Registration takes place at:

The Calderdale Register office
Spring Hall Mansion
Huddersfield Road
Halifax HX3 0AQ
Tel: 01422 288080

Births and deaths can also be registered at a Registry office closer to your home and the appropriate documentation sent out to you, although this may cause a small delay in funeral arrangements.

The Registry office will then send the completed paperwork to your chosen funeral director.

Who can register?

If you are married, then either of you can register your baby's birth and death. If not, you both need to attend if the father's details are to be included on the birth certificate.

The Coroner

When there has been unexpected death, or the Doctors are not able to decide on a cause of death and sign a death certificate, the baby's death will be referred to the Coroner for advice.

A Coroner is a qualified Doctor or Lawyer who examines deaths where the medical cause is unknown. The Coroner will liaise with the doctors at the hospital involved in your baby's death and decide if a death certificate can be signed. If not, they may request a post-mortem to be certain why your baby died, and this is not something you will be able to decline.

If your baby's death has been referred to the Coroner, the Coroner's Officer will contact you directly to give you advice and support, but in most cases, the registration and funeral will be delayed.

Can I see my baby again once I go home?

Once you have left the Maternity Unit it may be possible for you and your family to visit your baby again, at the hospital, the Funeral Director's Chapel of Rest or your local place of worship or Mosque.

Can I hold a funeral for my baby?

Saying goodbye to your baby is an important part of acknowledging your loss and beginning to grieve, and attending a funeral can be part of this. All families who lose a baby at the time of birth are offered a hospital burial or cremation and given the option to attend or not. Each funeral is for an individual baby and there is no cost to families for a basic funeral.

You can opt to have your baby cremated without attending the service but still have the cremated remains (ashes).

A hospital funeral includes the services of a funeral director with the option of a hospital Chaplain. Funerals can be religious or non-religious in character (and are often somewhere between), and we will work closely with you to ensure the funeral expresses your wishes and beliefs. You are encouraged to choose your own music and readings or poems, and bring along pictures, teddies and flowers. If other children are in the family and are going to attend, you may wish to consider how to involve them.

Our Muslim chaplains are experienced in supporting you with appropriate burial arrangements for Muslim babies.

Hospital burials will be at **Lockwood Cemetery, Huddersfield, Stoney Royd** or **Exley Cemetery, Halifax**.

Cremations will be held at **Parkwood Crematorium, Elland**.

Once you have decided on the right funeral for your baby, it usually takes place within 1-6 weeks, but this will depend on what investigations you have chosen. If a post-mortem examination has been performed and you want to include the tissue taken for testing in the funeral, this can delay the funeral process for up to 3 months.

If you do not wish to be involved in the funeral service, your baby will still be treated with the utmost of respect according to your wishes and faith.

Alternatively, you may wish to make private funeral arrangements for your baby, and you will need to contact a funeral director and clergy of your choice who will instruct you further. There is also the option of taking your baby home and arranging your own burial and further guidance is available from the hospital.

How will I feel physically after the birth?

Following the birth, you will have vaginal bleeding for around 4-6 weeks. In the early days, this bleeding can be quite heavy, and you may experience some mild cramping. This should become lighter after the first 3 or 4 days. It is advisable to use sanitary towels rather than tampons to reduce the risk of infection. If the bleeding becomes very heavy with clots, you experience a lot of abdominal pain or the discharge becomes offensive smelling, it is important that you contact your GP or Maternity Assessment Centre.

If you have had any stitches, it is important to look after them and maintain good hygiene to prevent any infection. These may be uncomfortable for the first week and a mild painkiller should help. They usually dissolve in 4-6 weeks.

It is also important to try and look after yourself and your general wellbeing and although you may not feel like eating or drinking, trying to have something little and often will help in your physical recovery.

You may also produce breast milk in the days following the birth and we will have a discussion with you regarding your breast care options while you are in hospital. You may opt to take medication to reduce breast symptoms, wait for natural suppression, or consider the option of donating breastmilk to our local breastmilk bank in memory of your baby.

The Hospital Review

If your baby was born after 22 weeks, it is a national requirement that we conduct a review into the care you received throughout your pregnancy and after the loss of baby. This is called a Perinatal Mortality Review (PMRT).

This will involve members of staff from this hospital and an external reviewer. The aim is to work out why baby died and to see if we can learn anything from your baby's death. An information booklet about this review will be given to you before you leave the hospital and you will have the opportunity to discuss and feedback on your care. A member of the review team will be in touch in the months after the birth to ensure that we have all your questions and you are informed of the progress of the review.

The booklet can be provided in English, Urdu, Punjabi and Arabic.

Will I have any follow-up?

Following discharge from the hospital, you will be offered a home visit or phone call from a community midwife. Telephone support will be provided by a bereavement midwife according to your needs and wishes, and the Chaplaincy staff are available to support you if you wish. You will be given contact numbers and support leaflets when you are discharged home.

A follow-up appointment with a Consultant Obstetrician will be offered to you usually 2-6 months after the birth of baby. This appointment may be delayed if you opted for a postmortem and we are waiting for results. The appointment will give you the opportunity to discuss what has happened, find out the results of any investigations performed and discuss future pregnancies and is optional.

Is there any ongoing help after I go home?

The emotional impact of baby loss is long lasting. Losing a baby is an experience that many will share, but everyone experiences grief differently. For some, expressions of grief will be overwhelming and public, for others grief may be private but no less deeply felt.

Feelings of shock, grief, depression, guilt, loss and anger are common. Grief may produce physical symptoms as well as emotional ones. Disturbed sleep, lack of appetite, nausea, anxiety and palpitations are normal and may be eased by discussing them with your partner, friends, with a doctor or midwife, or with someone who can listen and understand. When you are discharged, the staff will provide you with a list of helpful organisations and support leaflets.

Local support can be offered by the Forget me Not Children's Hospital and counselling arranged through Talkthru. Other options are available both locally and nationally.

The Chaplaincy department can also provide support and guidance irrespective of your Faith.

Contact Numbers

Bereavement Midwife	Tel: 07500761111
Screening Midwives	Tel: 01422 222123
Labour Ward	Tel: 01422 222129
Calderdale Royal Hospital Switchboard	Tel: 01422 357171
Huddersfield Royal Infirmary Switchboard	Tel: 01484 342000
General Office Calderdale	Tel: 01422 222088

Help and support

Chaplaincy Department: Contact via HRI and CRH Switchboard
Tel: 01484 342000 or 01422 35717

Talkthru: Revenue Chambers, St Peters Street, Huddersfield, HD1 1DL
Tel: 01484 515137
Email: office@talkthru.org.uk Web: www.talkthru.org.uk

SANDS (Stillborn and Neonatal Death Society)

Tel: 0808 1643332
Email: helpline@sands.org.uk

If you have any comments about this leaflet or the service you have received you can contact :

Sarah Hall
Bereavement Midwife
Calderdale Royal Hospital
Telephone No: 07500 761111
Sarah.hall@cht.nhs.uk

Ann Frost
Maternity Matron
Calderdale Royal Hospital
Telephone No: 01422 222947
Ann.Frost@cht.nhs.uk

www.cht.nhs.uk

If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.

Potřebujete-li tyto informace v jiném formátu nebo jazyce, obraťte se prosím na výše uvedené oddělení

Jeżeli są Państwo zainteresowani otrzymaniem tych informacji w innym formacie lub wersji językowej, prosimy skontaktować się z nami, korzystając z ww. danych kontaktowych

ਚ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਪ੍ਰਾਚੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਲੈਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ,
ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਉਪਰੋਕਤ ਵਿਭਾਗ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور فارمیٹ یا زبان میں درکار ہوں، تو
برائے مہربانی مندرجہ بالا شعبے میں ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

"إذا احتجت الحصول على هذه المعلومة بشكل مغاير أو مترجمة إلى لغة مختلفة فيرجى منك الاتصال بالقسم
المذكور أعلاه"