



York and Scarborough  
Teaching Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Taking your baby home

Information and Advice for Bereaved  
Parents

① For more information, please contact:

**Bereavement Services**

Tel: 01904 725445

The York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE

Or speak to your midwife



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Following the loss of a baby some parents decide to take their baby home from the hospital before the funeral for a short time.

This can give you the opportunity to spend time with your baby privately and in familiar surroundings. It can be an opportunity for siblings, relatives and friends to see your baby create memories and grieve with you.

You may also want to take your baby's body to a place that has special significance to you.

There is no legal reason why you should not do this unless the case has been referred to the coroner.

You may be able to take your baby straight home with you but if a post-mortem is required you will not be able to take your baby home until after this. You can arrange to bring your baby home after the post-mortem by contacting the bereavement services officers.

## **How do I take my baby home?**

You can take your baby home with you from the ward or from the Mortuary. If you go home and later decide that you would like to bring your baby home, you can contact the Bereavement Services officers to arrange this.

Before you leave the hospital, you will need to sign a form stating that you are taking your baby home and will either be arranging their burial or cremation, or will be bringing them back to the hospital. You will also be given a letter to take home with you which states that your baby has died.

You can take your baby home yourself by car if you wish, or you may want to use a funeral director for this (they may charge for this service). If you take your baby home yourself you can carry him/her in your arms, use a Moses basket or, if you prefer, a casket from a funeral director or one that you have made yourself. You will need to think about how fragile your baby is when deciding this. If you are unsure, the midwives or bereavement service officers will be able to advise you.

## **What happens when you are at home?**

When you are at home with your baby there are no rules about what you can and cannot do; you can spend the time as you choose. If you decide to take your baby to a special place, make sure you carry the letter you have been given by the hospital with you to prevent any misunderstanding.

When you are home the room that your baby is in will need to be kept cool and well ventilated. The use of fans and ice packs placed underneath the baby can assist you with this.

Some funeral directors have a special cuddle cold cot that they may be able to loan to you whilst your baby is at home. Please contact the bereavement officer at the hospital to see if this is possible.

Always keep windows closed whilst baby is at home and refrain from putting any heating on in the room and keep bedclothes to a minimum.

## **What changes could you expect with the appearance of your baby at home?**

During this time you should be aware that the appearance of your baby's skin colour may change and start to peel as the skin becomes fragile.

It is also not unusual for small amounts of bodily fluids to seep out, especially from baby's nose, after he/she has died. This is nothing to be alarmed by and fluids can be wiped away using tissue or baby wipes, which can be wrapped and disposed of within normal household waste.

Parents often use scented air fresheners within the room to mask any odours.

The midwife can discuss this further with you, if you wish, before you leave the hospital so that you are aware of what may happen.

## **How long can I take my baby home for?**

The length of time that your baby is at home with you will depend on your own wishes. Some parents have their baby home the day or night before the burial or cremation, but others need more time.

There is no legal limit for this, but it is important to remember that your baby's appearance will change.

If the hospital is arranging your baby's funeral you will need to keep the Bereavement Services officers informed of how long you would like to keep baby at home. They will liaise with the funeral director and the mortuary staff at the hospital to help you facilitate this.

Baby can be returned to the mortuary at the hospital or the funeral director chapel of rest, at a convenient time, prior to the funeral. If you would like baby to be collected from your home this can also be arranged by the Bereavement Services officers.



## **Bereavement Support whilst at home with your baby**

Your GP, community midwife, bereavement support midwife and the Bereavement Services officers at the hospital will be notified that you have been discharged home with your baby.

Should you have any queries during your time at home with baby you can contact any of the above for further support and advice.

## **What are your options regarding burial or cremation once you have taken your baby home?**

If your baby was born over 24 week's gestation you have a legal responsibility to have a funeral and organise either a burial or cremation for your baby.

If your baby was born under 24 weeks gestation, although there is no legal requirement, you still have the option of organising a burial or cremation for your baby.

# Where can you bury your baby?

If you do not want to bury your baby in a cemetery or churchyard you may wish to bury them in a place that holds a special meaning for you, such as in a garden, farmland or woodland. If you want to do this you do not need the help of a funeral director but will need to follow these guidelines:

- Get permission from the owner of the land for burial. If you do not know who owns the land you can contact HM Land Registry to check.
- Record the date and place of burial in a formal letter which should be attached to the title deeds of the property or land.
- If you have a loan or mortgage against the property you will need to notify any company or individual who has an interest in the property. You should also be aware that the burial may deter future buyers or occupiers and affect the value of the property.
- Bury your baby in environmentally biodegradable material; plastic boxes should not be used.
- Make sure there is no danger to any water courses or supplies and no danger of any bodily products leaking into adjoining land. The burial site should not be within 10 metres of any standing or running water, or 50 metres of a well, borehole or spring that supplies water for human consumption.

- You do not have to inform the Environment Agency but might want to check with them that the burial site meets their safety standards.
- Babies born before 24 weeks of pregnancy should be buried at a depth of at least 45 centimetres. Babies who are stillborn or die shortly after birth should be buried at a depth of 1.25 metres.
- When a burial is on private land there is no guarantee that the site will not be disturbed later so you may want to seek advice from a solicitor or the coroner's office.
- If your baby was born alive but died after birth (not after a stillbirth) the Certificate for Burial must be completed by the land owner and must be received by the registrar within 96 hours of burial. The registrar will give you this certificate to complete when you register your baby's death.

There are also privately owned woodland burial sites which you may prefer to use. You can find out more about these from the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management.

It is important to think carefully about burying your baby on private land in case you move house and that the land maybe used for new purposes in the future.

## **How to contact us**

If you have any more questions or need any further advice about taking your baby home you can contact the hospital on one of the following numbers:

### **The York Hospital**

Bereavement Services Officers /

Bereavement Support Midwife

01904 725445

Monday-Friday 8.30-16.30 (excluding bank holidays).

Mortuary

01904 726803

Chaplaincy

01904 725579

Labour Ward

01904 726004

Switchboard

01904 631313

### **Scarborough Hospital**

Bereavement Service Officer/

Bereavement Support Midwife

01723 385178

Monday-Friday 8.30-16.30 (excluding bank holidays).

Mortuary

01723 342213

Chaplaincy

01723 342500

Labour Ward

01723 342124

Switchboard

01723 368111

## **Other useful contact**

[www.sands.org.uk](http://www.sands.org.uk)  
020 7436 5881

Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management  
[www.iccm-uk.com](http://www.iccm-uk.com)  
020 8989 4661

HM Land Registry  
[www.gov.uk/guidance/contact-hm-land-registry](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/contact-hm-land-registry)  
0844 892 1111

The Natural Death Centre  
[www.naturaldeath.org.uk](http://www.naturaldeath.org.uk)  
01962 712 690

Bereavement Advice centre  
[www.bereavementadvice.org](http://www.bereavementadvice.org)  
0800 634 9494

The Good Funeral Guide  
[www.goodfuneralguide.co.uk](http://www.goodfuneralguide.co.uk)  
01527 595 358 or 07557 684 515

[websites accessed November 2021]

## **Tell us what you think of this leaflet**

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:

Bereavement Services, The York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE or telephone 01904 725445.

## **Teaching, training and research**

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

## **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email [pals@york.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@york.nhs.uk).

An answer phone is available out of hours.

# Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

Please telephone or email if you require this information in a different language or format, for example Braille, large print or audio.

如果你要求本資 不同的 或 式提供 , 電  
或發電

Jeżeli niniejsze informacje potrzebne są w innym języku lub formacie, należy zadzwonić lub wysłać wiadomość e-mail

Bu bilgileri değişik bir lisanda ya da formatta istiyorsanız lütfen telefon ediniz ya da e-posta gönderiniz

Telephone: 01904 725566

Email: [access@york.nhs.uk](mailto:access@york.nhs.uk)

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