



## Financial assistance

Financial assistance may be available from Centrelink. You can contact Centrelink on **1800 118 388**.

It may be necessary to record your baby's birth with Medicare to receive reimbursement for expenses. You will receive accounts from doctors, hospitals and other services after your baby has died. This may be confronting for you.

## Choices about burial, cremation, funeral or memorial services

If the birth and death of your baby are not registered, you may bury your baby wherever you wish. If the birth and death of your baby are registered, your baby must be buried in a cemetery or cremated.

Many families decide to have a funeral or memorial service to commemorate their baby's birth and death. Making these decisions and arrangements are a special thing that you can do for your baby.

## Choosing a funeral company

Families can make their own arrangements for burial, cremation, a funeral or memorial service, or they can engage a funeral company. Most funeral companies provide information, advice and support to families, as well as appropriately sized coffins.

Your hospital will take care of your baby as long as you wish. Remember to keep them informed of your requirements. You can take your time making decisions.

## Choosing a cemetery

Many cemeteries offer a special children's area. These are often very colourful. Some families find that this a comforting place to visit.

Cemeteries have different policies around whether you can decorate your baby's grave with memorabilia. It is a good idea to consider these policies before choosing one.

## Support when you need it

Red Nose Grief and Loss provides information and support to families whose who experience pregnancy loss, stillbirth, baby or child death.

We offer a range of different ways to receive support.

### These include:

- Our 24/7 Support Line, 1300 308 307
- Online or face to face support groups
- Online bereavement chat
- Peer supporters
- Counselling
- Guiding Light, our online grief and loss library
- Hospital to Home
- Remembrance services

You have time to make decisions that make you comfortable. If you are not ready to reach out, your hospital can do so on your behalf.



# Decisions

When your baby has died



### Red Nose Bereavement Support Services

Support for anyone who has been impacted by pregnancy loss, stillbirth, baby and child death

**24/7 Support Line** 1300 308 307

peersupport@rednose.org.au

**Support Library** rednosegriefandloss.org.au

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# Decisions

## When your baby has died

You are reading this pamphlet because your baby, or babies, have died or will soon die. In the next few hours and days, you will face decisions that you may find difficult, especially as you struggle to understand what has happened. We are here for you, and we hope this pamphlet will give you information about the choices you have at this difficult time.

### Your baby has died

The death of a baby is a devastating event for a family. There is no normal. You may experience confusing and conflicting emotions. Initially, you may feel hesitant and scared about how your baby will look. The staff at your hospital will be able to describe what you can expect. They can support and advise you during the birth and in the first hours with your baby.

### You can see and hold your baby

Don't be afraid to tell staff if you want to see and hold your baby. You may be able to bathe and dress your baby, take your baby for a walk or even take your baby home for some time. Don't be afraid to do things that you would do for a living baby.

### Friends and relatives

It is often helpful for your other children to meet their brother or sister. You can also invite close relatives and friends to the hospital to meet your baby. This may help them to support you in your grief. You may also need to have time without your baby. Ask the staff to care for your baby when you are ready for a break.

## You can take photographs of your baby

Take as many pictures as you wish – they may become very precious to you. Don't worry about how the photographs look.

Some families ask a professional photographer to take photographs of their baby. Your hospital may be able to recommend a photographer.

As your baby may have some bruising on the skin, black and white photographs may be softer. You can convert your colour photographs to black and white later. You may find it hard to look at the photographs, especially initially – however having these mementos can bring comfort later.

## You can create other memories of your child

In addition to taking photographs, there are many ways to ensure you have keepsakes to remember your baby. You can record your baby's length and weight. Hospitals may offer the opportunity to make plaster mouldings or prints of your baby's hands and feet or take a lock of hair.

## Naming your baby

Choosing a name for your baby may be important. If you are unsure of your baby's gender, consider a gender neutral name. Even if you are not required to register your baby's birth, it may help you, your family and friends to call your baby by their name.

Some religions offer baptism or blessings for babies who have died.

There may be a social worker or pastoral care worker at your hospital who can assist you in making these arrangements.

## Finding a reason

You may be offered the option of having an autopsy. It is important to discuss this option and clearly state your wishes. An autopsy may give you information about why your baby died, which may help you plan future pregnancies. An autopsy may also find no known cause for your baby's death. This may be distressing, but some families like to discuss the report with their doctor.

## Birth registration

States and Territories may have varying requirements around registering a birth, so check with your hospital about these. Your hospital staff will be able to give you the relevant documents.

If you don't need to register your baby's birth, you can receive an early-pregnancy loss commemorative certificate through your birth registry office.

## Leaving hospital

Many parents find leaving the hospital without their baby is hard. The options available may change depending on whether or not your baby's death is registered. You can arrange to take your baby home with you or organise a funeral company to take your baby into its care.

Most hospitals will take responsibility for making arrangements for your baby if you choose not to do it yourself.

## Going home

You may find that going home is a challenging and confronting time. There may be reminders of your baby, such as the nursery or baby capsule. Sometimes well meaning friends and family pack these items away. This can be very upsetting.

Some parents find it sad but comforting to touch, see and smell things that remind them of their baby. If having these reminders is difficult, you can put them away until you are ready.

People express their grief in different ways. There is no right way to grieve. Many find they cry a great deal in the early days and months, but not everyone expresses their grief in this way.

**Red Nose Grief and Loss Support Line is available 24/7 on 1300 308 307.**

