

When Things Don't Go to Plan

Instructional Guide for Educators



A common theme amongst bereaved parents is that they had no idea that stillbirth was a possibility. We acknowledge that stillbirth can be a difficult topic to discuss with expecting parents and it is common to feel uncertain as to how to approach these conversations. It is for this reason we have developed this video for you to share in your antenatal classes and we hope it will support you in having these conversations with parents.

This short video is titled “When Things Don’t Go to Plan”. The story focuses on a near miss of stillbirth, where a parent followed their instincts and sought help when their baby’s movements changed.

Given that stillbirth is hard to talk about we recommend having conversations early on in the antenatal classes so it isn’t a taboo subject. These conversations can be coupled with making Safer Baby Bundle available to parents. Here are some tips on how to deliver this video in your classes.

- Watch the video first to familiarise yourself with the content. It’s important to know what to expect and be able to anticipate questions that parents may have after watching the video. We have listed some FAQs below to help you too;
- If possible, have relevant information resources available in class for parents to take, for example, QUIT smoking cessation support resources and Safer Baby Bundle resources;

- Emphasise why prevention information is so important as confronting as it may be to discuss;
- Before introducing the video, share the 3 steps to reduce stillbirth (listed below);
- Give a clear outline of the content/story that will be screened to prepare the parents for what they are about to see. You could also mention stillbirth prevention is a topic covered in any communications sent to parents leading up to the antenatal class to introduce it early;
- Given you may have couples with lived experience of stillbirth in your class it is important to let them know about the video content as they may find it triggering and choose not to watch it. They didn’t have the happy ending the mum in the video has.
- Acknowledge some parents may wish to opt out of watching the video within the group setting and prefer to watch the video in private (link to be emailed to participants) giving the option to leave during a tea break;
- Offer to stay back after class if anyone has questions to ask or would like to share information and remind participants they can also follow-up with their midwife / obstetrician if they have any further questions. Any bereaved parents in subsequent pregnancy can also get support from the **Red Nose 24/7 Grief and Loss Support Line 1300 308 307.**

FAQs

- **Is stillbirth preventable?**

Not every stillbirth is preventable and we still do not understand all the reasons for stillbirth. Sadly, there are many bereaved parents who do not know what led to the death of their baby. However, there are some simple things that can be done to reduce the risk of stillbirth.

- **How common is stillbirth?**

The rate of stillbirth in Australia is 6.7 stillbirths for every 1,000 births. This equals around 2,200 babies who are stillborn every year, according to data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). That's six stillbirths every day or one every four hours. It can happen to anyone, and while stillbirths can't always be prevented, there are ways to reduce risk of it happening.

- **Is there is a “safe” period after which stillbirth cannot occur?**

Unfortunately, there is no ‘safe period’ Stillbirth can occur at any time during a pregnancy, right up to and even during birth. However, from 28 weeks the rate of stillbirths has been gradually decreasing and evidence indicates that these stillbirths are the ones most likely to be preventable (Flenady et al. 2016). This highlights how important it is to follow all the steps to reduce your risk, throughout your entire pregnancy.

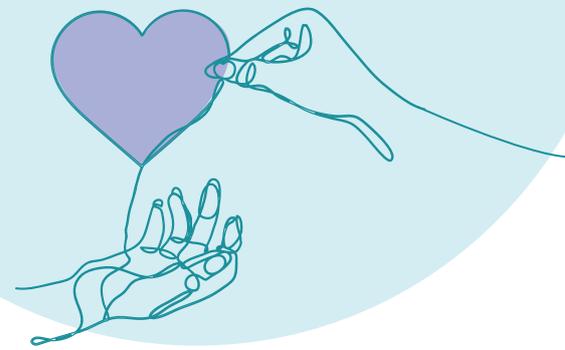
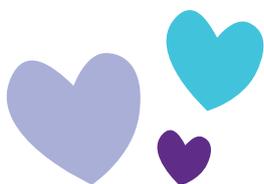
- **What can pregnant women do to reduce their risk of stillbirth?**

There are three simple steps which can reduce the risk of a baby being stillborn:

1. Stop smoking and avoid second hand smoke
2. If you feel your baby’s movements change, contact your maternity care professional immediately
3. Go to Sleep on your side after 28 weeks.

- **What is the advice on smoking for pregnant women?**

Smoking during pregnancy is a major contributor to stillbirth. Stop smoking and avoid second hand smoke by encouraging others not to smoke around you. Ask your healthcare professional about advice and support on how to stop smoking, and available services to support quitting.



- **What is the advice on alcohol for pregnant women?**

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) recommends that if you are planning a pregnancy, pregnant or breastfeeding, ‘it is safest not to drink alcohol’. You should also seek advice from your health care provider. If you are concerned about your own drinking, consult your General Practitioner.

- **What is the advice around baby’s movement for pregnant women?**

Monitoring the way in which your baby moves is important. If you feel any change in movements, whether that be an increase or decrease from what is usual for your baby, it could be a sign that your baby is unwell. If movements change, contact your maternity care professional immediately. Don’t believe the myths – **babies do not stop moving towards the end of pregnancy.**

- **What is the advice for sleeping for pregnant women?**

Go to sleep on your side after 28 weeks to halve your risk of stillbirth compared to sleeping on your back. If you wake up and find yourself on your back, don’t worry, just move back on to your side when you go to sleep again.

- **What is fetal growth restriction (FGR)?**

Fetal growth restriction (FGR) is defined as a fetus (baby?) who has not been able to achieve its full growth potential in relation to its gestational age.

Detection and management of a baby that is not growing properly during pregnancy is a key strategy to prevent stillbirth.

Red Nose recommends that women attend all of their antenatal appointments. Working together with healthcare providers will help keep you and your baby healthy and safe.

For more information and tips on reducing stillbirth, please visit the Red Nose webpage.

<https://rednose.org.au/section/safer-pregnancy>

More detailed information can be found in the Safer Baby Bundle handbook.

[SBB-Handbook_Final-1.pdf \(stillbirthcre.org.au\)](https://rednose.org.au/SBB-Handbook_Final-1.pdf)

For bereavement support call Red Nose Grief and Loss 24/7 Support Line on 1300 308 307