

# Information for Parents after a Miscarriage

➤ English

➤ January 2020

The miscarriage of a baby is often unexpected. It is a heart-breaking experience for you as parents. This information will help you and your family make difficult decisions. When you receive the news that your baby is going to die, or has died, the social worker can guide and support you with:

- what to do next
- time with your baby
- creating memories
- funeral service or other options
- post mortem
- loss and grief support services

## What to do next

You will be admitted to a single room on a hospital ward. The doctors, nursing staff and social work team will meet you there to discuss the plan for delivery of your baby. You can have a support person such as your partner or another family member stay with you while you are in hospital.

## Time with your baby

You may want to see your baby. The hospital staff and social worker can describe what your baby looks like to help prepare you. The staff can dress and wrap your baby in a blanket for you to spend time with them. Many parents have said that this experience has helped them to grieve and create memories.

It is up to you as parents to decide how much time you want to spend with your baby. Hospital staff will support the wishes of your family.

Other family members may also want to see your baby to express their love. It is up to you as parents to decide who should see your baby. You may want to contact your local religious leader to conduct a ceremony or blessing. The social worker can arrange to have this done in the privacy of your hospital room or in the hospital chapel.

## Creating memories of your baby

Creating memories of your baby may bring comfort to you. The options include a memory box that may contain details like the weight and length of your baby, cot card, wristband, hand and foot prints, a lock of hair or photos. You may also want to spend time with your baby, bathing and dressing your baby and taking your own special pictures. You can also apply for a “Recognition of early pregnancy loss” certificate. The social worker can help you in creating these memories of your baby.

## Funeral service or other options

There is no legal requirement for a funeral if your baby is less than 20 weeks gestation. Many families choose to have a funeral service which is a ceremony to honour the life of your baby. Your baby will be kept in the hospital mortuary until you have chosen a funeral director.

If you decide not to have a funeral, there are some other options you can choose:

- A private burial. You can speak to the social worker to help you to organise this.
- You may take your baby home for up to eight hours to allow you and your family to spend time with your baby. You will then need to bring your baby back to the hospital.
- A hospital cremation. Your baby will be cremated at a Memorial Park. Families are invited to attend the Memorial and scattering of ashes in a dedicated garden area. The garden is often a special place to reflect and remember your baby.

## Post mortem

The medical team may discuss with you the option for an examination to determine the cause of death. Some parents ask to find out if the cause of death is genetic. It's entirely your decision. Results may not always provide answers and can take some time. Once they are available the medical team will provide you the results in a follow up appointment.

## Loss and grief support services

Red Nose Grief and Loss  
Bereavement Support (24 hours)  
Phone: 1300 308 307  
[www.rednosegriefandloss.com.au](http://www.rednosegriefandloss.com.au)  
Email: support@rednose.com.au

Bears of Hope  
Pregnancy & Infant Loss Support  
Phone: 1300 114 073  
[www.bearsofhope.org.au](http://www.bearsofhope.org.au)

Sands Australia  
Sands Support Line  
Phone: 1300 072 637  
[www.sands.org.au](http://www.sands.org.au)

*Professional interpreters are available if you need help understanding or speaking in English. You may have a family member or friend present, but all communication about your care should be through a professional interpreter. Interpreter services are free and confidential. It is your right to ask for an interpreter if one is not offered to you. The staff will book the interpreter for you.*

*Reviewed by The St George Hospital Consumer Advisory Group December 2017*