

Information for supporting you when your unborn baby dies

Information for parents, relatives and carers

① For more information, please contact:

Maternity Services

Please see our contact details on page 21

Contents	Page
Introduction	3
What happens next?.....	4
The onset of labour	4
What is the induction process?.....	8
Pain relief options	9
What happens when I'm ready to give birth?	10
What happens after I have delivered my baby?	11
Will I have to make any decisions about my baby?.....	12
Can I take my baby home?.....	16
How will my body react after the delivery of my baby?	17
Who visits me once I've gone home?	18
Do I have any further appointments?.....	18
Where can I go for emotional support?	20
Useful telephone numbers.....	21
Tell us what you think of this leaflet	23
Teaching, training and research.....	23
Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS).....	23

Introduction

When a baby has died, parents often feel overwhelmed by their sadness. We extend our sympathy to you, and appreciate that the days and weeks following the death of your baby can be bewildering and difficult. It is especially hard that there are important decisions that have to be made at a time when you probably feel quite unable to think calmly or clearly about anything.

There is no right or wrong way to do things. Take your time. You do not necessarily need to make any decisions immediately. Try to take things one step at a time.

This leaflet deals with your immediate care and the birth of your baby.

What happens next?

You may go home to prepare for the delivery of your baby and consider the choices available, providing that you are well enough to do so.

It is safest for you to go through labour to deliver your baby. Whenever possible we will adhere to your plans for your labour. We will explain all options and procedures to you as often and as thoroughly as you wish.

The onset of labour

You may wait at home for the onset of natural labour. When you wish to begin the process of induction of labour please contact the hospital.

If you do not wish to wait for the natural onset of labour we will plan with you when it is appropriate for your labour to be started (induced).

This is only the beginning of your journey.

Prior to your admission, as part of the induction process, you may have been given prostaglandin tablets called Mifepristone to swallow. This helps to soften the cervix and can make induction of labour easier and reduce the time you are in labour. Parents can then go home and return when they are in labour, or 48 hours later for further induction.

Some parents are medically unfit to go home or may not want to go home. Please discuss this with the midwife who is caring for you in order to make the best plan of care for yourself.

There are four places that are available for delivering your baby. These are

- Bereavement room in York located just off labour ward.
- Labour ward in York
- Bereavement room in Scarborough located on the labour ward.

Parents are requested to contact the nominated ward for delivery at 08.00 hours on the date booked to ensure that this is still available. If this is unavailable further options for care will be discussed with you or admission may need to be delayed.

When you return to the Hospital ward you and your family will be shown to your room. A midwife will be allocated to care for you.

You will need to bring into hospital with you:

- An overnight bag and toiletries
- Nightwear and comfortable clothes
- Underwear
- Slippers and dressing gown (optional)
- Sanitary towels

You may like to bring things with you for your baby, for example clothes, toys, mementos. You may also bring a camera for you and your family to take pictures of your baby.

Whilst at home take your time to re-read all the information given to you and you may want to start filling out the plan of care booklet with your wishes for delivery and immediate care of your baby.

You could also download the Sands bereavement support app on: www.sands.org.uk/app. This can help guide you through your bereavement journey.

There are a number of voluntary support groups/helplines and websites that you can also view, located in the back of this booklet.

Some parents experience passive movements of their baby before delivery, this can be very distressing and if this occurs please discuss this with the medical staff/midwife that is caring for you.

If you go into labour at home you will need to return to the hospital please contact the midwives on labour ward in order to arrange this.

You may return to hospital before the date arranged if you no longer wish to remain at home.

Please telephone the Labour Ward using the telephone numbers at the back of this booklet.

What is the induction process?

Your midwife will continue the induction process by giving you further prostaglandins. These can be given either orally or vaginally or both, this depends on how many weeks pregnant you are and what the medical staff have prescribed. The prostaglandin will be repeated until you are in active labour or deliver you baby.

You may feel some pain and discomfort, similar to that of period pains and some backache. You may also feel sick. If your baby has not been born within the first round of prostaglandins then you will then need a rest period before starting to have any more prostaglandin. This can take some time so please be prepared to be in hospital for several days.

As part of the induction process, or to speed up your labour, you may also need a “drip” placing in your arm. This will contain a hormone called oxytocin which increases contractions and can also increase the pain you have in labour.

The doctor and midwife will explain which of these options would be most suitable for you.

It may take some time to induce your labour. Please be prepared for this. You and your partner are welcome to invite family and friends to support you.

Will I be given any pain relief?

Induction and labour can sometimes be a long, painful process. Pain relief is always available.

In early labour you may like to consider coping options such as warm baths, pain relieving tablets (e.g. Paracetamol) or a TENS (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation) machine.

Stronger methods of pain relief are available whenever you need them. Your midwife or doctor will answer any questions you may have about this.

Pain relief options

- ❖ PCAS – (Patient Controlled Analgesia Systems)
A Morphine pump which enables you to control your own pain relief

- ❖ Epidurals are available when you are in labour

- ❖ Entonox (“gas and air”)

Injections of opioids are not recommended as they may cause drowsiness and affect your ability to understand what is happening and remember the events in the future which may add to your distress.

What happens when I'm ready to give birth?

Towards the end of your labour, you may feel pressure in your bottom and an urge to push. Your midwife may need to examine you to see if your baby's birth is imminent. When she is sure you are ready she may then encourage you to push to give birth to your baby. With your permission she will give you an injection to help deliver the placenta. This will usually be delivered soon after the baby. Sometimes the placenta can take longer to deliver and you may need surgical intervention if this occurs.

The midwife will discuss with you if you need any stitches and perform this procedure when you have enough pain relief.

Once your baby is born we will carry out your wishes according to your plan of care. You may change your mind about anything at any time.

What happens after I have delivered my baby?

You and your partner are welcome to stay as long as you need. Throughout your stay you are welcome to invite family, friends and children to support and help you through this difficult time.

You will be offered opportunities to meet and hold your baby and create memories. Parents often find making memories following the death of their baby valuable and sharing these memories may be beneficial to the grieving process in the future.

The midwife will be guided by you at this time and what you may have decided prior to delivery on your plan of care. You may change your mind at any time and decline any or all mementos if you wish that are offered to you.

If you have any particular requests do not hesitate to talk to the staff, no one will think any request is unusual or strange.

You need to be aware that your baby's body will alter following the birth. Keeping the environment cool and the special "cold cot", "cold plate" or "cold mattress" which your baby will be in/on when not being held significantly slows this process. This means that the baby can be with you as long as you wish.

Will I have to make any decisions about my baby?

Normally when a person dies, those who were closest to them have a store of memories to help them remember and remain connected to the dead person. Parents can find making memories and having keepsakes following the death of their baby valuable and sharing these memories may be beneficial to the grieving process.

The staff caring for you will suggest a range of things you could do. Take time to think about what is right for you, you can accept or decline any offers that are made to you or you may have other ideas about what you want to do.

There is more information about the issues below within the following:

- Sands bereavement support book.
- Sands bereavement support app
on:www.sands.org.uk/app.
- “Information to help you following the loss of your baby,” booklet.
- Your patient hand held bereavement notes.

Seeing and holding your baby

You may want to see and hold your baby straight away or you may want time to decide. Many parents find the idea of seeing and holding their baby strange and a bit frightening, but for many parents the time spent with their baby becomes their most precious memory.

Whether you see or hold your baby is your choice and you will be supported in which ever decision you make, you can of course change your mind at any time before your baby's funeral.

Bathing and dressing your baby

Depending on your baby's size and condition, you may want to wash and dress him or her yourself. Or you could ask the midwife to do this for you. You may want to bring something from home for your baby to wear. If your baby is very small or premature, the hospital can supply suitable clothing for you to choose from.

Blessing or baptism

Your midwife will contact the hospital chaplain if you would like them to, or you may ask your own minister to come to the hospital.

There is a Book of Remembrance at York and Scarborough hospital sites. If you wish, your babies name can be entered into this, the bereavement service officer can advise you about this.

Photographs

Your midwife will offer to take photographs of your baby, which can include family photographs. If you are unsure whether to have photographs taken discuss this with your midwife. If you don't wish to take these home immediately they can be stored in your medical notes in case you decide to collect them in the future. You can of course take your own photographs, but please discuss the development of these with your midwife.

Depending on your baby's gestation and the availability of the photographer it may be possible for your midwife to contact a member of the `Remember My Baby` team to come and take some photographs of you and your baby.

Hand and footprints

Equipment is available for you to take hand and footprints of your baby or you can ask the staff to do this on your behalf. Sometimes this is not possible due to the size or condition of your baby

Mementos

Parents and other relatives are very welcome to bring any mementos at all that they would like to give to the baby. The hospital can also offer mementos and you can chose to keep these, or to leave them with your baby. A small box can be provided in which you may keep any mementos, such as wristbands, blankets etc. A memory book can be completed on your behalf.

A Post Mortem

The midwife and doctor will discuss the reasons that a post mortem examination may be useful with you and your partner. It may help to find out why your baby died or help you to make decisions about future pregnancies. There will be plenty of time for you to find out about this procedure and think about it. Both of you would be asked to sign a consent form if you wish to go ahead. These take place at Leeds Hospital.

Registration

If your baby is over 24 weeks gestation you will be given a Certificate of Stillbirth that has to be taken to the Registrar of Births and Deaths. You will need to make an appointment with the Registrar who will give you the certificate that is needed for a funeral or cremation to take place.

Registration can now be completed via a telephone appointment with the registrar. In this case the stillbirth certificate is retained by the hospital and is scanned across to the registration office. Once the certificate has been received they will contact you to arrange an appointment date/time to register the birth and death of your baby over the phone.

Can I take my baby home?

There is no legal reason why parents should not take their baby home to make their own arrangements for the funeral unless the death is to be investigated by a coroner.

For your protection and to avoid misunderstanding there is some important paperwork which will be given to you to complete. If you would like to do this please have a look at the 'Taking Your Baby Home' leaflet.

If you have consented to a post mortem you can still take your baby home following this procedure.

Some families also opt to have the baby at home the night before the funeral. Please discuss this with the bereavement officer who can guide you through this procedure.

Funeral, Cremation or Burial

Every baby that is born after 24 weeks must legally be buried or cremated. Babies before this can also have a funeral/burial or cremation. A member of Bereavement Services will discuss this with you following the birth either whilst you are in hospital or via phone after discharge. All parents need to discuss with the bereavement officer their wishes about what happens to their baby.

How will my body react after the delivery of my baby?

You may start to produce breast milk following the birth of your baby. Your midwife will offer you medication that could prevent this, though you may experience some side effects such as dizziness, headache or nausea. Please ask your midwife for the booklet `lactation after baby loss` if you require any further information.

You can expect a moderate amount of vaginal bleeding, which reduces slowly over the first week but may last three to four weeks before disappearing.

Your uterus should gradually return to its non-pregnant size. This can take up to 10 days. During this time you may experience painful period type stomach pains or `after pains` these may be relieved by Paracetamol.

Your perineum may be bruised and painful, even if you do not have stitches. A daily bath and careful hygiene is advised for this and Paracetamol will help this discomfort.

Further information is within your hospital postnatal notes along with important symptoms you need to be aware of.

If you have any other problems or complications your midwife or doctor will explain these to you as needed and answer all your questions. Please do not hesitate to ask your GP or community midwife if you are worried about anything.

Who visits me once I've gone home?

When you leave hospital your GP, community midwife and health visitor will be informed of your loss and transfer home. Your community midwife will phone you the following day and arrange a visit. Your partner will need some time off work too. Please ask someone to inform their GP if you are not registered at the same practice.

Do I have any further appointments?

You and your partner will be sent an appointment to see your consultant when the results from all investigations undertaken are available. This may be up to twelve weeks or even longer. We understand that it may be difficult to return to the hospital but it will give you the opportunity to discuss what has happened. You will have plenty of time to ask questions. Do keep a list of things you would like to ask.

The hospital will review the care you received to try and understand why your baby died. There are many different types of review and you may be asked if you would like to contribute to the process. Any relevant Information following the review will be discussed with you via the consultant and/or Senior midwife.

Who will contact me after discharge?

The midwife who specializes in bereavement will contact you via telephone to guide you through the bereavement process. You will also receive a letter following your discharge home with further support information and contact details for voluntary groups.

If you would like to see them or discuss anything with them at any point please contact them via email at yhs-tr.bereavement.midwives@nhs.net and leave a message. They will contact you on their next working day.

Bereavement services can also arrange this for you. All contact details are in the back of this booklet.

The bereavement team will also send you a questionnaire to allow you to feedback on any aspect of your care. If you would like a response to this please include your details on the questionnaire, otherwise it is anonymous.

If you have not met the bereavement officer during your stay they will contact you after a few days. Alternatively you may want to contact them.

Once discharged home the bereavement officers can keep you informed about your baby, funeral arrangements.

Where can I go for emotional support?

Reactions to grief are very important. You and your partner may experience differing emotions/feelings at the same time. The Sands bereavement support booklet and support App lists some possible effects of grief. If this is not available at the hospital, it can be accessed via the Sands web site www.uk-sands.org. This book is available online in different languages.

Please contact your midwife or GP at any time if you need to talk to them. We recognise that people need different amounts of support. If you feel that it would be helpful to speak to someone who has suffered a similar loss the telephone number for the Sands phone number is provided. Your midwife will make this call if you find it difficult. Your GP may be able arrange professional counselling for you. You can also self-refer to IAPT (improving access to psychological therapies).

Included within the booklets you have received from the hospital there are a range of national support group contact details and useful telephone numbers you may need in the future, which you can contact at any time for support and further information.

We recognise that nothing we offer can alleviate your grief, but we hope that this information explains what will be happening to you, and the services we are able to offer, help as you begin to cope with your loss.

Useful telephone numbers

Patient Advice and Liaison
Service (PALS) 01904 726262

The York Hospital

Labour Ward: 01904 726004

Community Midwife: Contact via Maternity
Medical Records during office hours: 01904 726720

Registrar's Office: 01904 654477

Bereavement Support Midwife:
Email: yhs-tr.bereavement.midwives@nhs.net

Bereavement Services: 01904 725445

Chaplaincy 01904 725579
(Office hours/voicemail)

Scarborough Hospital

Labour Ward: 01723 342124

Bereavement Services 01723 385178

Bereavement support midwife
Email: yhs-tr.bereavement.midwives@nhs.net

Chaplaincy 01723 342500

Switch board 01723 368111

Stillbirth and Neonatal Death (SANDS)

National helpline open Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm:
020 7436 5881, web site: www.sands.org.uk

British Association for Counselling And Psychotherapy

01455 883300

Miscarriage Association

A national organisation set up by parents who have
been through the pain of miscarriage.
www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk

Helpline:

01924 200 799

(IAPT)

Improving access to psychological therapies.
www.northyorkshireiapt.co.uk

Twins Trust (Previously known as TAMBA)

Bereavement Support Group
For parents who have lost one or both twins or more
from multiple birth.
www.twinstrust.org
Helpline: 01252 332 344.

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:

Labour Ward, The York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE or telephone 01904 726730.

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.

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

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