

Information for pregnancy loss

Maternity Department



Patient information leaflet

Considerations and advice for you at this difficult time

This leaflet is designed to give you some practical information you will need leading up to and immediately following the birth of your baby. We hope this will offer help and guidance in your time of need. Our midwives and doctors are here to help you in any way they can. They will try to answer your questions and to offer you the support you need.

Introduction

This is an emotional time for you and the feelings that you may experience can vary from shock to disbelief. Losing a baby is an experience that many will share, but we all react differently. For some, expressions of grief will be overwhelming and public. For others they may be very private, but no less deeply felt. These feelings may also vary between you and your partner.

Partners, family and friends may all find it difficult to show their emotions. Many of us need to share our emotions in order to be able to cope with them. These feelings are real and painful, but they are also acceptable and understandable.

Grief may produce physical symptoms, for example disturbed sleep, lack of appetite, nausea or palpitations. These are all normal reactions and may be eased by sharing them with professionals, family and friends. Grief throws our lives out of balance and there will be good days and bad days. Try not to panic – all of this is normal.

Try not to make any major decisions, as major changes at this time could be unsettling.

What do I need to bring to hospital?

Your stay may be a few days, so bring enough clothing, nightwear and toiletries (including maternity pads) for you and your partner. You may like to bring something for your baby to wear; if your baby will be very small a blanket would be suitable. However, the hospital can provide this if needed. You could also bring a soft toy or anything else you

would like to put in the cot or Moses basket with the baby. Other items you may wish to bring include camera, mobile phone and charger, snacks and soft drinks. If you plan to park your car at the hospital ask staff about weekly parking permit and prices.

Where will I be staying?

We have a separate private room called the Forget-Me-Not suite which is located on Level G of the Royal Surrey County Hospital on Delivery suite. The room's facilities include en-suite shower room, refrigerator, tea and coffee, and a sofa bed to allow your partner/friend/family member to stay with you overnight. Within the room there is a memorial book where parents can write messages in memory of their baby.

What will happen when I am admitted to hospital?

At your initial visit the process of delivery will be discussed with you. At this point the induction of labour process may be commenced with one oral tablet called Mifepristone, which is an anti-progesterone tablet. This allows the uterus to become more sensitive to the medications given to you later. After you have taken the tablet you may be able to go home but you will be asked to return if you are unwell. You will be admitted for the induction process 36-48 hours later.

The staff caring for you will be expecting you. When you arrive please say you are for admission to the Forget-Me-Not room as this will inform people that you are facing a bereavement.

What is the process of induction and delivery?

At your stage of pregnancy, it is safer to make the uterus (womb) contract to deliver your baby rather than using a surgical method, which might damage the cervix (neck of the uterus) or the uterus itself. We know it is a very difficult time – throughout the procedure your partner or friend can be with you. You will receive a lot of support from the midwives and doctors and plenty of pain relief if and when required.

As you are aware, you have been given a single Mifepristone tablet. In common with most drugs, Mifepristone can cause some side effects including:

- **Nausea:** this is relatively common and requires no specific action. You may eat and drink as you wish. The tablet will cause vomiting in some women. If you vomit once or twice but feel well otherwise, you can stay at home. If the vomiting is persistent you should telephone delivery suite on **01483 464133**.
- **Diarrhoea:** mild diarrhoea is very common and no specific treatment is required.
- **Dizziness:** this is not usually serious and no specific treatment is required.
- **Vaginal bleeding:** this is a common side effect and spotting or light bleeding is not of any concern. If you feel that the bleeding is heavier than a period you should telephone delivery suite to discuss this with a midwife. The midwife may suggest that you return for review.
- **Abdominal pain:** period like pain frequently occurs after taking Mifepristone. This can usually be treated with any pain killer like Paracetamol or Codeine. Aspirin or Ibuprofen should not be taken. Simple treatment such as a warm bath or a hot water bottle may be helpful. If the pain is more severe than period pain or does not settle with pain killers then please telephone delivery suite on **01483 464133**.
- **Rash:** an infrequent side effect of Mifepristone is a development of a skin rash. Unless the rash is itchy or you have other symptoms such as swelling, you do not need to do anything. If concerned please contact delivery suite on **01483 464133**.

The Mifepristone will be followed by Misoprostol; the first dose of this will be given vaginally. These tablets are given to start the uterus contracting. You will then be given the medication orally every 3 hours until the contractions become more regular. In some circumstances other methods of induction may be more appropriate and in these cases this will be discussed with you.

It can be difficult to predict how long labour or induction of labour and the birth will take. In some circumstances it can be very quick; in others it may be prolonged. Your midwife or doctor will discuss pain relief with you and an anaesthetist is available to ensure you experience as little discomfort as possible.

At the time of delivery the placenta (afterbirth) may come away on its own but occasionally it may be necessary for you to go to theatre to have this removed, usually under a spinal anaesthetic. The amount of blood loss at the time of delivery is variable and on rare occasions may be quite heavy necessitating a blood transfusion.

If your blood group is Rhesus negative an injection of Anti-D will be given to you at the time of your diagnosis and following delivery.

Will I get to see and hold my baby?

You may be anxious about seeing your baby as this can be a daunting experience but most parents are pleased to have this precious memory. You will be offered the opportunity to see and hold your baby if you would like to do so. However, it is your choice and whatever your decision this will be respected.

It may be possible to take your baby home for a few days, so if you would like to do this please ask the midwife caring for you and additional information can be provided.

How can I remember my baby?

The midwife can take photographs of your baby with your consent and you can also take your own. The photos that are taken by the midwife are yours to take home if you wish to do so. If neither of you want the photos now, they will be saved in the hospital notes for collection at a later date. Alternatively the photos can be taken home in a sealed envelope for you to look at when you feel ready to do so.

For babies over 24 weeks gestation, depending on availability, you may be offered the free service of Remember My Baby, a non-profit organisation of professional photographers who have volunteered to carry out sensitive portrait sessions for bereaved families. Please ask a member of staff for more information on this if you are interested.

A memory box will be offered. The contents of this will include hand and foot prints, your baby's identity bracelets and other items depending on your stage of pregnancy. As well as the keepsakes mentioned above, you may want to collect other things to put in the memory box such as scan pictures, poems, condolence letters, emails and cards, and anything else that helps you to remember your baby. Some parents like to keep the blanket their baby was wrapped in at birth or an identical set of the clothes they dressed their baby in.

Are blessings available for my baby?

You may have your baby blessed by the Hospital Chaplain or a minister of your own choice. This blessing can occur either with or without you being present. A blessing card will then be given to you.

You may have very specific needs, including religious and cultural needs and we wish to ensure that these needs are met. Please let us know what your requirements are and how we can help you. Having a spiritual leader, pastor, priest, imam, or rabbi can be greatly comforting. Spiritual support can be obtained through the Hospital Chaplain, your own minister or your religious representative can be called – just ask your midwife.

Even if you do not have a religious faith or not practicing your religion, it may be helpful to meet the Hospital Chaplain who is happy to discuss any issues with you in an unbiased way to help and support you at this difficult time.

What investigations will be performed?

You will be offered a variety of blood tests which may help to determine why this has happened to your baby. These will usually be carried out before the baby is delivered; please ask your doctor or midwife for more information regarding these tests.

With your consent, some non-invasive swabs may be taken from the baby and placenta in order to look for a potential infection.

Will my baby be offered a post-mortem examination?

A post-mortem examination of your baby's body and placenta may help find out why your baby has died. Post mortems find new and often significant information about the cause of the baby's death in 60-80% of cases (SANDS, 2014). A post mortem may also discover whether there is a problem that could affect any future pregnancies. Even if a post mortem does not find a clear reason for your baby's death, it may rule out some possible causes. Post mortems may also contribute to important research into why babies die and so help prevent more deaths in the future.

We have separate information leaflets regarding post mortem examination for you to read. If you decide to go ahead with the post mortem this is discussed and your consent obtained by either your doctor or our specialist bereavement midwife. You do not need to make any decision in a hurry. Please feel free to ask any questions you may have.

It is your decision whether you choose to have a post-mortem for your baby and your decision will be respected.

There is a period of time known as the 'cooling off period' which lasts approximately 24 hours following your consent where you could change your mind. You will be given instructions on how to do this.

The post-mortem examination will be performed by a specialist perinatal pathologist at St Georges Hospital, Tooting. Sometimes, during busy periods, your baby's post-mortem may be performed in another hospital. Your baby will return to Royal Surrey County Hospital within 7-10 working days. As soon as your baby is back, we will inform you of this so that you can start making your funeral arrangements. If you are not making your own funeral arrangements, please let us know if you want to be contacted when your baby is back.

The post-mortem results will be available at your follow up appointment in 10-12 weeks' time.

Do I need to register my baby?

Babies who are not born alive before the 24th week of pregnancy (e.g. up to 23+6 weeks) do not need to have their birth or death registered.

If you deliver your baby after 24 weeks of pregnancy and your baby is not born alive, you need to register your baby's stillbirth. You will be given a Stillbirth Certificate together with a Birth Notification by the midwife upon discharge. In this case you have 42 days to register the stillbirth.

If your baby was born alive and subsequently died (a neonatal death) regardless of gestational age, you will need to register your baby's birth and death. You will be given a Medical Cause of Death Certificate together with a Birth Notification by the midwife. In this case you need to register the birth and death within 5 working days of the death.

These documents are placed in a special medical registration envelope to be given to the Registrar.

Please ring **01483 518248** to book an appointment, telling them it's for a stillbirth/neonatal death so that your appointment can be sensitively arranged at an appropriate time.

What arrangements can be made for my baby's funeral?

Babies under 24 weeks

Although you do not need to register the birth and death of your baby, you may still wish to have a funeral. You may want to attend the funeral or feel this is not something you want to do. Every family makes their own choices.

The following funeral arrangement options can help you decide what is best for your family.

- a. If you have your own minister or religious leader or you simply wish to make your own private arrangements you may contact your own local funeral director and ask them to make arrangements for you. You will need to decide whether you would like a burial or a cremation. There may be some cost involved and your funeral director can advise you on this. The Relatives Office (**01483 303361**)

can assist you in finding a funeral director in your area. If your baby is having a post mortem this could take 2-4 weeks before the funeral director can collect your baby for the funeral.

- b. You may ask the hospital to organise an individual funeral only attended by your family and friends. This is a short personalised service led by a hospital chaplain. It lasts about 20 minutes and is held at Guildford Crematorium followed by cremation. J. Gorrings & Sons are the funeral director. The date and time will be agreed between you, Gorrings and the chaplain taking the service. You may choose music and poems and also how religious or non-religious you would like the service to be. Extras such as flowers, video, orders of service, musicians, cars are paid for by you, not the hospital. You will have an opportunity to meet with the chaplain to plan the funeral and receive support for your loss, if you would like this.
- c. If for any reason you do not wish to attend your baby's funeral, a chaplain will take a short service at Woking Crematorium for up to four babies but each baby will be cremated separately. Parents will be informed of the date. These funerals take place once a month.

Stillbirths (over 24 weeks gestation)

You will need to register your baby's stillbirth.

The following funeral arrangement options can help you decide what is best for your family.

- d. If you have your own minister or religious leader or you simply wish to make your own private arrangements you may contact your own local funeral director and ask them to make arrangements for you. You will need to decide whether you would like a burial or a cremation. There may be some cost involved and your funeral director can advise you on this. The Relatives Office (**01483 303361**) can assist you in finding a funeral director in your area. If your baby is having a post mortem this could take 2-4 weeks before the funeral director can collect your baby for the funeral.

- e. You may ask the hospital to organise an individual funeral only attended by your family and friends. This is a short, personalised service led by a hospital chaplain. It lasts about 20 minutes and is held at Guildford Crematorium followed by cremation. J. Gorrings & Sons are the funeral director. The date and time will be agreed between you, Gorrings and the chaplain taking the service. You may choose music and poems and also how religious or non-religious you would like the service to be. Extras such as flowers, video, orders of service, musicians, cars are paid for by you, not the hospital. You will have an opportunity to meet with the chaplain to plan the funeral and receive support for your loss, if you would like this.

Babies born alive at any gestation

You will need to register your baby's birth and death.

The following funeral arrangement options can help you decide what is best for your family.

- a. If you have your own minister or religious leader or you simply wish to make your own private arrangements you may contact your own local funeral director and ask them to make arrangements for you. You will need to decide whether you would like a burial or a cremation. There may be some cost involved and your funeral director can advise you on this. The Relatives Office (**01483 303361**) can assist you in finding a funeral director in your area. If your baby is having a post mortem this could take 2-4 weeks before the funeral director can collect your baby for the funeral.
- b. You may ask the hospital to organise an individual funeral only attended by your family and friends. This is a short, personalised service led by a hospital chaplain. It lasts about 20 minutes and is held at Guildford Crematorium followed by cremation. J. Gorrings & Sons are the funeral director. The date and time will be agreed between you, Gorrings and the chaplain taking the service. You may choose music and poems and also how religious or non-religious you would like the service to be. Extras such as flowers, video, orders of service, musicians, cars are paid for by you, not the hospital. You will have an opportunity to meet with the chaplain to plan the funeral and receive support for your loss, if you would like this.

Baby's ashes

If you decide to have your baby cremated you may wish to think about what you would like to do with your baby's ashes. This can be discussed with you at a later time once you have returned home.

Memorial service

We hold an annual "Thanksgiving and Remembrance Service for Babies Loved and Lost" in May. You will be sent an invite to this service nearer the time.

What can I expect for my recovery?

Recovery time will vary from woman to woman, listed are a few aspects you need to be aware of:

Blood Loss: The amount of blood loss will differ. In general, vaginal bleeding may last for 7-10 days. In some women, spotting may persist until the next period. If the bleeding is decreasing and the colour is changing from red to brown, then there is no cause for concern.

You may experience a slight increase or a moderate amount of fresh red bleeding when you first return to physical exercise but this bleeding should settle as your physical recovery continues. You are advised to wear sanitary towels, not tampons, to assess blood loss and prevent infection.

Pain: You may experience some mild period like cramping in the first couple of days which should be relieved by Paracetamol or Ibuprofen. If this pain is not relieved by pain killers, please seek advice from your GP or contact Delivery Suite.

Lactation: You will probably start to produce milk 3-4 days following delivery and this can obviously be very distressing for you. Medication is available to stop this process occurring if you wish. You may also want to take a mild painkiller such as Paracetamol. You will be more comfortable if you wear a well-fitting bra until the process is finished. You can also buy breast pads to soak up any leaking milk.

Perineal Care: Sometimes the perineum can be painful, swollen or bruised after childbirth. The following advice may be helpful:

- It is important to keep your perineal area clean and dry.
- Change your sanitary towels regularly.
- If it stings when you pass urine, pour water over your perineal area while urinating.
- Avoid constipation and straining. Ensure you have plenty of fluids, fresh fruit and vegetables to keep your bowels moving.
- Pelvic floor exercises are important and should be started as soon as possible. These exercises will increase blood flow to the area and help to speed up healing.

Sexual Activity: This can be resumed when your bleeding has settled and you feel comfortable. Hormonal changes may make your vagina drier than usual, so a lubricating jelly might help. Your periods may take 4-6 weeks to return. If you do not wish to become pregnant again or get pregnant yet, do not have unprotected sex.

Emotional Recovery: Grief is a healthy human response to help cope with loss and each person's response to pregnancy loss will vary greatly. Some will experience a profound grief reaction while others may have a more philosophical response. There is no right or wrong way to grieve and no correct timeframe. Feelings of great sadness, disbelief, guilt and anger are common and it is important for your family and friends to understand and accept these emotions as part of a normal grieving process.

Our specialist bereavement midwife counsellor will be able to support you through this process.

What follow up support is available?

You may go home when you feel physically well.

The hospital staff will answer any immediate questions you may have. We will inform your GP and community midwife about the death of your baby, so if you want to talk things over with them, they will understand what has happened.

The specialist bereavement midwife counsellor will contact you to arrange a home visit. If you need advice or if you have any concerns or worries before she rings, please contact Delivery Suite on **01483 464133** or contact the specialist bereavement midwife on **01483 571122 ext 2745** or **07547 641426**.

If you had any complications during your pregnancy and labour, you may also have/need visits from the community midwife.

You will be sent an Alice bereavement follow-up appointment to see your Consultant 10-12 weeks following your delivery. Alice is the name we use for all our bereavement follow up appointments so that everyone involved with your care (e.g. midwives, nurses, receptionists and medical secretaries) are aware of what you have gone through. It is important that you ask any questions you have; it may help to make a note of them beforehand so that you do not forget anything. At this appointment you will be able to discuss the results of any investigations that have been carried out and any implications it may have for future pregnancies. You also have the opportunity to discuss further pregnancy plans.

Please make an appointment with your GP at 6 weeks post-delivery. This appointment is to ensure your physical recovery.

Please seek advice from your GP or contact Delivery Suite if you have:

- increase in your bleeding or if you are passing clots
- a bad/offensive smell from your bleeding
- pain that is not relieved by Paracetamol or Ibuprofen
- high temperature/fever/sweats

Is there any additional support?

It is not easy to take everything in at this time, therefore we hope this leaflet which is written to compliment the Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Charity's (SANDS) "Saying Goodbye to You Baby" booklet will be of assistance to you.

Useful contact details

Delivery Suite

- Telephone: 01483 571122 ext 4699 / 4815
- Telephone: 01483 464133 (direct line)

Sheryl Roy (Specialist Bereavement Midwife Counsellor)

- Telephone: 01483 571122 ext 2745
- Mobile: 07547 641426
- Email: sherylroy@nhs.net

Miscarriage Association

- www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk
- Helpline: 01924 200799
- Email: info@miscarriageassociation.org.uk

Surrey SANDS (Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Charity)

- www.surrey-sands.org.uk
- Helpline: 07817 410075
- Email: surrey.sands@btinternet.com

BLISS (the special care baby charity)

- www.bliss.org.uk
- Helpline: 0500 618140
- Email: enquiries@bliss.org.uk

ARC (Antenatal Results and Choices)

- www.arc-uk.org
- Helpline: 0845 077 2290
- Email: info@arc-uk.org

Contact details

Delivery Suite

Telephone: 01483 571122 **ext** 4699 / 4815

Telephone: 01483 464133 (direct line)

Sheryl Roy (Specialist Bereavement Midwife Counsellor)

Telephone: 01483 571122 **ext** 2745

Mobile: 07547 641426

Email: sherylroy@nhs.net

PALS and Advocacy contact details

Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located on the right hand side as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding RSCH patient services.

Telephone: 01483 402757

Email: rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net

Opening hours: 9.00am–3.00pm, Monday to Friday

If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.

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