

Patient Information

Advice and guidance for parents who have suffered the loss of their baby during pregnancy

The midwives and doctors caring for you, your partner and family are deeply sorry for your loss. They are here to provide you with some support and guidance through this difficult time and to help you in any way they can. They will try to answer your questions and offer you the emotional and physical support that you may need.

Although they appreciate that reading this information will be difficult for you, they hope that it may help you to feel more prepared for the next few days.

What should I do before I come into hospital?

Once the doctor has established that no heartbeat can be found, an ultrasound will be performed to confirm the loss of your baby.

The midwives will then arrange your return to the labour ward where they will discuss with you the following plans for managing your loss.

The midwives and the obstetrician will organise for you to take some tablets (called Mifepristone) which will help induce your labour.

You will then return home and begin to prepare yourself and your family for the birth of your baby. This will provide the opportunity for you and your partner to organise a support network for you both after your baby is born.

In the mean time you may experience some period-type pains or signs of labour which may include some pain or discomfort and sometimes bleeding. You can call us at anytime of day or night for advice or reassurance and the numbers will be given to you before you go home.

If there are no signs of labour **after 48 hours**, you will be asked to return to the delivery suite. A date and time will be given to you. You will need to bring an overnight bag for yourself and clothes for your baby if you wish. If you do not have suitable baby clothes, we can provide a small selection for you to choose from.

You can choose whoever you wish to support you through this time: your partner, mother, sister or a friend.

Who will look after me?

A midwife will be assigned to look after you and you should receive one-to-one care wherever possible.

How will my baby be delivered?

A pessary will be inserted into your vagina by the midwife or the obstetrician to help initiate the labour (called Misoprostil). After this, oral tablets can be taken every three hours until your baby is delivered. Some women may wait several hours before the labour becomes established and some women may experience a much quicker delivery; it is impossible to know beforehand.

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Your waters could break during the labour or stay intact throughout and you may experience a small amount of vaginal bleeding. Vaginal examinations are necessary to assess the progress of your labour but we will try and keep these to a minimum.

As the labour progresses you may feel some pressure in your bottom. This is normal and may indicate that your baby is ready to be delivered.

When you are ready to give birth to your baby, the midwife will stay with you throughout and provide you with support and guidance.

How will the hospital support my pain relief?

The midwife looking after you will offer you various options regarding pain relief which can be discussed prior to your admission to the labour ward; **for example:** TENS, Entonox (gas and Air) or Pethidine. If your baby is over 35 weeks you may consider discussing different options with the on-call anaesthetist. They will be available to assist in making the best choice for you.

A drip will need to be placed in your arm and various blood tests will be carried out. The results of these tests may be vital in giving you, your partner and the consultant information towards understanding potential causes.

Later in your labour we may need to give you a hormone drip to increase your contractions. Before doing so, we will discuss your preferences for pain relief with you.

We will try and alleviate any pain you may experience and we would recommend that you accept the pain relief offered to you. Your care is paramount and we will advise you and respond to your wishes to the best of our abilities.

How can the hospital support us?

When you feel ready to do so we will discuss your wishes regarding:

- seeing and holding your baby
- taking photographs (we will do this for you if you would prefer)
- taking your baby's foot and hand prints.

We will also discuss post-mortem and funeral arrangements with you.

We can also arrange a blessing/baptism if you so wish and all denominations can be catered for.

After your Baby is Born

Once your baby has been born it is your choice as to whether you or your partner wish to hold him/her straight away or maybe wait a while. The choice throughout all your care is yours and we will do our very best to respect and fulfil your wishes.

Following delivery, the midwife must ensure that the placenta (afterbirth) is delivered. This can often take some time but is essential. After this we can leave you and your support partner to spend some private time together which can include spending some time with your baby.

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How long will I be in hospital?

You will need to stay in for a few hours or sometimes longer depending on your condition. During this time we will take photographs and footprints and dress your baby. We will keep these for you (indefinitely) until you are ready to see them.

What should I do when I go home?

You will be able to arrange for yourselves or family and friends to see your baby over the next few days by prior arrangement.

The community midwife will make contact with you to offer continued support once you are home. If you prefer not to have this extra support, your wishes will be respected. Your General Practitioner (GP) will be notified of the loss of your baby.

Will I have to come back to hospital?

You will be offered an appointment to see the obstetric consultant to discuss any issues and ask any questions that you may have. This may take 8-12 weeks as we will be waiting for all the investigation results to be available.

Will my milk still come in after I have had my baby delivered?

Your breasts may produce milk within the first few days after your baby is born. You will be advised to keep your breasts well supported with a comfortable soft bra, and to take pain killers such as paracetamol or anti inflammatories such as ibuprofen if required. If you have any concerns, speak to your community midwife or your GP.

What external support is there for us once we are home?

We offer ongoing support at the Baby Memorial Services that are held at the hospital chapel; (a list of dates will be given to you).

Finally we would like to offer you our heartfelt sympathies at this sad time. Please do not hesitate to let us know if you would like to discuss something or have any special wishes. We will do our utmost to help.

Sources of information

Child Bereavement Charity – Information and Support Telephone Line – 0845 357 1000
Website – www.childbereavement.org.uk

SANDS – (Stillbirth and neonatal death charity) helpline – 0207 7436 5881
Website – www.helpline@uk-sands.org

Miscarriage Association – 01924 200799
Website – www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk

Bereaved parents support group – Conquest Hospital, The Ridge, St Leonards-on-Sea
Tel: (01424) 757062

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Important information

Please remember that this leaflet is intended as general information only. It is not definitive. We aim to make the information as up to date and accurate as possible, but please be warned that it is always subject to change. Please, therefore, always check specific advice on a procedure or any other concerns you may have with your doctor.

Hand hygiene

In the interests of our patients the trust is committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is a very important factor in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available throughout our hospitals at the patient bedside for staff to use and also at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

Other formats

This information is available in alternative formats such as large print or electronically on request. Interpreters can also be booked. Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) offices, found in the main reception areas:

Conquest Hospital

Email: palsh@esht.nhs.uk - Telephone: **01424 758090**

Eastbourne District General Hospital

Email: palse@esht.nhs.uk - Telephone: **01323 435886**

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

Written by : Debbie Stratford, Midwife

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information: Guideline Implementation Group, Labour Ward Forum, Women's Focus Group and this leaflet has been discussed and agreed at the Strategic Business Unit Women's Health Operational meeting

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Responsible Clinician: Gayle Clarke Specialist Midwife Practice Development, Dexter Pascall, Obstetric Consultant.