



Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Respectful Disposal of Tissue Following an Early Pregnancy Loss

Information for patients



We understand that this may be an emotional and difficult time for you and hope that the following information will be helpful.

You may find yourself with some sensitive decisions to make. This leaflet has been written to explain the choices that you have.

We would like to assure you that all remains of an early pregnancy loss are treated with care and respect. Please do ask if you have any further questions or would like more information.

Sensitive and respectful disposal of pregnancy tissue

Following your pregnancy loss, there are several options available to you:

- hospital burial, carried out on your behalf
- private and individual arrangements.

The timing of the arrangements may vary if investigations have been requested. Tissue from early pregnancy loss may be sent to Histopathology or our genetics laboratories, to try to find out the cause of your loss. This will not be appropriate in all cases, but please discuss this with the nurse looking after you.

Tissue in the form of laboratory (histology) blocks and slides, which are used for diagnostic purposes, are normally stored as part of your medical record.

If you have chosen to make arrangements privately and wish to collect your pregnancy remains following any investigations that may have been carried out, please note these will be returned to you preserved on microscope slides and blocks.

There are a range of responses to pregnancy loss. It is important that you are aware that there is no right or wrong way to respond and we are here to help support you in whatever you choose.

Hospital burial carried out on your behalf

You may decide that you want the remains of your pregnancy to be respectfully buried by the hospital.

If this is the case, we will arrange a communal burial and funeral which is carried out by the Trust's appointed Funeral Director and Hospital Chaplain. The hospital will be responsible for the funding and arrangements.

Your pregnancy tissue will be buried in Headington Cemetery. You are welcome to visit the SANDS memorial garden which is a space in Headington Cemetery, dedicated to those who have experienced a pregnancy loss.

Private and individual arrangements

You can also make your own private arrangements. If you would prefer this option, a local Funeral Director will be able to guide you through the process and answer any queries you may have. Most Funeral Directors do not charge for their professional advice or service in this instance. They will be happy to discuss your wishes and concerns, before taking any formal instructions to go ahead with the funeral arrangements.

The hospital service is managed by Boswell's Funeral Director (**01865 553 737**) and they should be able to advise you if you prefer private arrangements.

If you would like some specialist help with the service, for instance from a Humanist Advisor or a Community Faith Leader, a funeral director should be able to provide you with a relevant contact.

You may wish to consider cremation, however, it is important to be aware that there are rarely any ashes produced following cremation of an early pregnancy. Crematoriums do not normally charge for this type of cremation.

There are also a number of woodland or natural burial sites available now. For more information, view the Natural Death Centre website at www.naturaldeath.org.uk or call the helpline on **01962 712 690**.

Can anything be put in the casket?

If you have decided on a private burial, items such as cards, photographs, small soft toys or jewellery may be able to be placed inside the coffin.

If you have decided on cremation, cards, photographs or small soft toys may be placed in the casket, but jewellery or glass cannot be cremated.

The Funeral Director will be able to guide you if you are unsure of what you can include.

Burial at home

You can, if you wish to, take the remains of your pregnancy home to bury yourself. If you choose to do this, there are certain environmental requirements which need to be met:

- The burial must not cause any danger to others.
- It must not interfere with any rights other people have on the land.
- There must be no danger to water supplies or watercourses.
- There must be no chance of bodily fluids passing into or onto adjoining land.
- The remains must be buried at a depth of at least 18 inches (45cm).
- Permission must be obtained from the landowner if you do not own the land.
- Careful thought must be given when considering burial in a garden, taking into account what would happen if you move house or the land is used for new purposes in the future.

Blessing, prayers and pastoral care

If you would like the opportunity to discuss a blessing or need pastoral support following your pregnancy loss, please ask the staff looking after you to contact the Hospital Chaplain.

Chaplains are available for everyone and offer impartial care for you, your family, friends and people of all faiths and none.

Telephone: **01865 857 921**

Email: [**chaplaincy@ouh.nhs.uk**](mailto:chaplaincy@ouh.nhs.uk)

This service is available 24/7, out of hours please contact the Chaplain via the 'on call' pager system.

If you have any questions

We appreciate this is a lot of information. If you wish to discuss any of this information, please speak to one of the health professionals looking after you or contact one the numbers below.

Gynaecology Ward, John Radcliffe Hospital

Telephone: **01865 222 001**

Early Pregnancy Assessment Unit (EPAU), Rose Hill Oxford

Telephone: **01865 221 142**

Horton Early Pregnancy Assessment Clinic, Horton General Hospital

Telephone: **01295 229 090**

Further support

Support can also usually be offered through your GP, as well as from the following organisations and support groups.

Women's Centre Counselling Service

This offers a relevant counselling service in a supportive environment.

Telephone: **01865 221 235**

This is not a 24 hour service, but an answering machine is always available.

Miscarriage Association

The Miscarriage Association offers support and information for those affected by pregnancy loss, including support in another pregnancy. There is a network of support groups and telephone contacts throughout the UK.

Helpline: **01924 200 799**

Website: www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk

Email: info@miscarriageassociation.org.uk

Talking Space Plus

Talking Space Plus offers more general counselling and the chance to help yourself to cope with life's ups and downs, to feel better and to learn your own strategies for keeping well.

Helpline: **01865 901 222**

Website: www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/oxon-talking-therapies

Email: talkingspaceplus@nhs.net

Tommy's

Accredited midwife-led support and information for anyone who has experienced the loss of a baby, whether through miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, molar pregnancy, termination for medical reasons, stillbirth or neonatal death.

Helpline: **0800 0147 800**

Website: **www.tommys.org/baby-loss-information-and-support**

Email: **midwife@tommys.org**

CRADLE Charity

A national pregnancy loss charity offering resources and support, including CRADLE Comfort Bags filled with essential toiletries made available to women or couples receiving care, during or following pregnancy loss.

Phone: **0333 443 4630**

Website: **www.cradlecharity.org**

Email: **info@cradlecharity.org**

Weekly Online Pregnancy Loss Support Group: Book via website
www.cradlecharity.org/connected

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

Authors: Gynaecology Patient Information Co-ordinator
Gynaecology Team
Early Pregnancy Team
Chaplaincy Services
Bereavement Team

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Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

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charity@ouh.nhs.uk | 01865 743 444 | hospitalcharity.co.uk

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