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Taking care of your mental health

After pregnancy or baby loss

A simple guide

This resource is available
in multiple languages.
Ask your midwife for
more information.



Surrey and Sussex

Taking care of your mental health after pregnancy or baby loss



Very sadly, some babies die during pregnancy, birth, or shortly afterwards.

Every loss is different. There is no right or wrong way to feel about it.

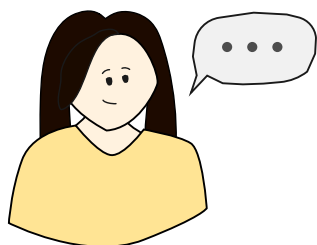


You do not have to go through this loss alone.

This guide explains where you can get support.

Taking care of your mental health after pregnancy or baby loss

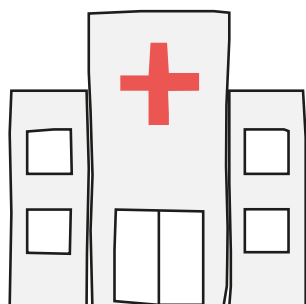
Who can help



There are some things you can do to look after your mental health. These include:

- Gentle movement every day.
- Talking to someone you trust.
- Being realistic about what you can get done.
- Asking for practical help when you need it.
- Eating well.

It is okay not to be okay. Each person's reaction to loss is different.



Click on the links below to find out more about support in your area.

West Sussex and Brighton & Hove:

uhsussex.nhs.uk/resources/support-for-families-around-the-time-of-bereavement

East Sussex: esht.nhs.uk/service/maternity/bereavement

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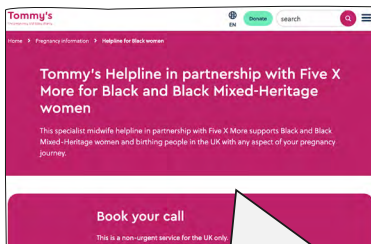
Who can help

Tommy's
Together, for every baby



The Tommy's helpline is for anyone who has had a pregnancy loss.

Call 0800 0147 800 or email midwife@tommys.org



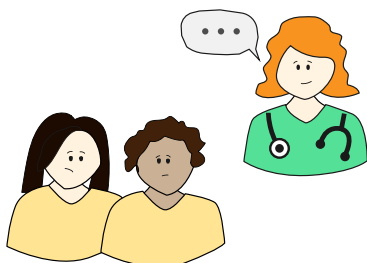
Tommy's also runs a special line for Black and Black Mixed heritage and birthing people.

Click on the link below to book your video call.

tommys.org/pregnancy-information/about-tommys-pregnancy-information/video-call-service

Taking care of your mental health after pregnancy or baby loss

Who can help



You can talk to your midwife, health visitor, nurse or GP.

They will explain the services that can help and whether there is a waiting list for them.



Click on the links below for more information on health visitors in your area:

Brighton and West Sussex:

healthforunder5s.co.uk/sussex/services/specialist-support/specialist-health-visitors-perinatal-and-infant-mental-health-pnmh



East Sussex: familyhubs.eastsussex.gov.uk/families/mental-wellbeing

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Who can help



NHS talking therapies help some people with grief. They involve talking to an expert about how you are feeling.

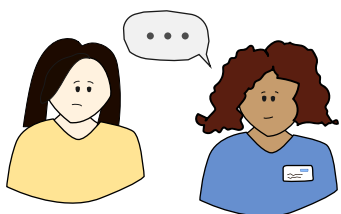
You can access support using the links below. Your GP can also refer you.

Brighton: brightonandhove wellbeing.org/talking-therapies

East Sussex: healthinmind.org.uk

West Sussex: westsussex talkingtherapies.nhs.uk

Surrey: mindmattersnhs.co.uk



Your care team may refer you to the Specialist Perinatal Mental Health Service for further support.

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Who can help



If you need help right now you can:

- Call 111 and choose the mental health option.
- Call the Samaritans on 116 123.

In Sussex you can also:

Text the word SUSSEX to 85258.

In Surrey you can also:

Call 0800 915 4644.

Miscarriage and ectopic pregnancy



The early pregnancy team will care for you if you lose your baby before 14 weeks.

They will talk you through your options.

They will also care for you if you have an ectopic pregnancy. This is when your baby grows outside of the womb.

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Miscarriage and ectopic pregnancy



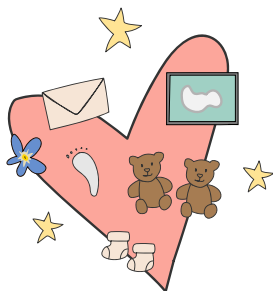
The Miscarriage Association supports anyone affected by miscarriage.

Click on the link below to find out more.
[miscarriageassociation.org.uk](https://www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk)



The Ectopic Pregnancy Trust supports anyone who has had an ectopic pregnancy.

Click on the link below to find out more.
[ectopic.org.uk](https://www.ectopic.org.uk)



If you experience a miscarriage or ectopic pregnancy, your nurse or midwife can suggest ways for you to make memories.

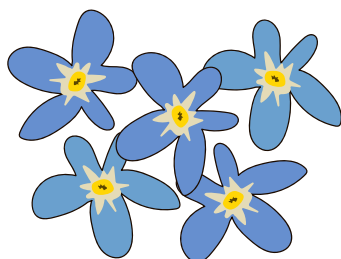
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Late miscarriage



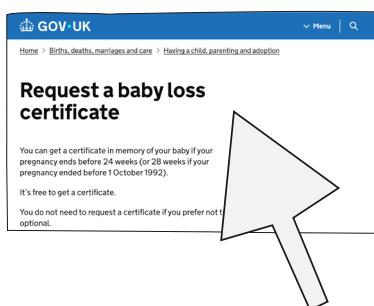
If you lose your baby between 14 and 23 weeks it is called a late miscarriage.

You may be unsure about whether you want to see your baby. You can ask your midwife to describe them or show you a photo so you know what to expect.



The hospital can arrange a cremation service. You can choose whether to attend or not.

If you want an individual cremation or burial you need to choose a funeral director.



You can apply for a baby loss certificate to remember your baby if they die before 24 weeks.

Click on the link below to find out more.
gov.uk/request-baby-loss-certificate

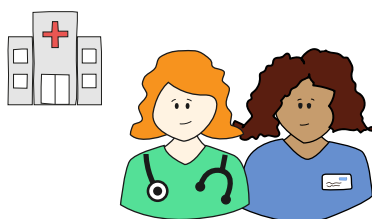
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Baby loss for medical reason



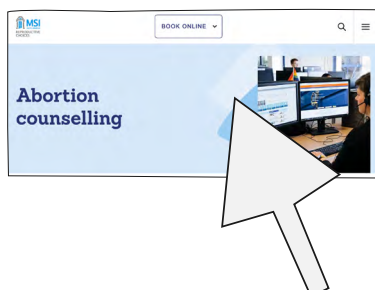
If you have to end your pregnancy for medical reasons your loss is no less real or painful. This type of baby loss is called termination for medical reasons or TFMR.

Your options for spending time with your baby will depend on what stage your pregnancy is at and what treatment you have.



If you have surgical treatment you will receive care from a specialist provider.

You will not go back to the maternity ward.

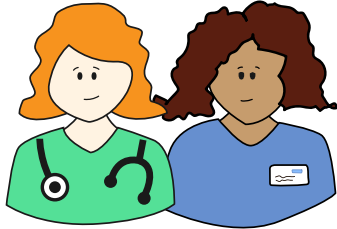


MSI UK provides free counselling after TFMR.

Call 0345 300 8090 for more information.

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Stillbirth



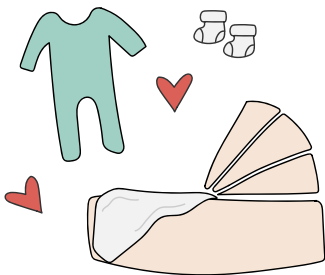
Finding out that your baby has died or is dying is a huge shock.

Your midwife and doctor will explain your options.



You may want to spend time with your baby.

You can ask your midwife to describe them or show you a photo so you know what to expect.

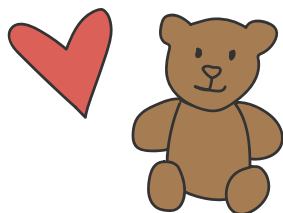


Some people want to wash and dress their baby.

You could also ask a family member, friend or staff member to do it for you.

You can use your baby's own clothes and Moses basket or carrycot if you want to. Your hospital may also have items you can use.

Stillbirth



Before their funeral your baby will be cared for in the hospital mortuary.

Any special clothes, toys or mementoes can stay with your baby.

You can ask your midwife who to contact if you want to see your baby again after you have left the hospital.

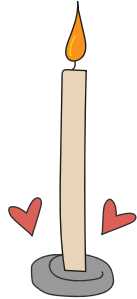


If there is no need for a post-mortem, you may wish to take your baby home before their funeral.

This is a personal choice. Your midwife can talk to you about what it would involve. They will support you to do what feels right for you and your family.

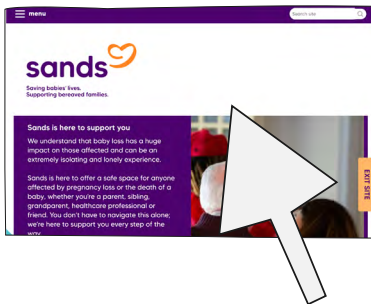
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Stillbirth



Many parents choose to plan their baby's funeral.

Your midwife can give you information about local funeral directors.



Sands is a charity for anyone affected by the loss of a baby, including stillbirth.

Click on the link below to find out more.
[sands.org.uk](https://www.sands.org.uk)

What happens next



If your baby dies after 22 weeks your hospital will carry out a Perinatal Mortality Review. This is to try to find out why your baby died and if your care could have been better.

The hospital should ask if you have any questions or worries you want raised.



Some people find understanding what happened helps them with their grief. But it can also be upsetting.

You may not get answers to all your questions.



Sands offers information and support to help you understand the review process.

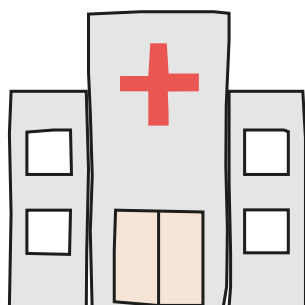
Click on the link below for more information.
sands.org.uk/reviews-and-investigations

Bereavement midwives



There are special midwives who can support you with your loss. They are called bereavement midwives.

You can contact them no matter how long ago you lost your baby.

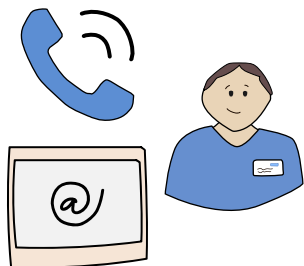


Click on the links below to find out how to speak to your hospital's pregnancy loss or bereavement midwives.

West Sussex and Brighton & Hove:
uhsussex.nhs.uk/services/maternity/specialist-support/pregnancy-loss

East Sussex: wesht.nhs.uk/service/maternity/bereavement

Bereavement midwives



Bereavement midwives can usually support you by email, telephone or in-person.

Let them know what you would prefer.

Follow up letters



It can take a little while for your loss to be recorded on hospital systems and sent to staff in other teams caring for you.

This can include your health visitor or GP.

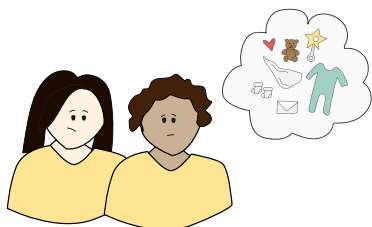


This may mean you receive automatic letters which can be upsetting.

Your hospital will try to stop this happening.

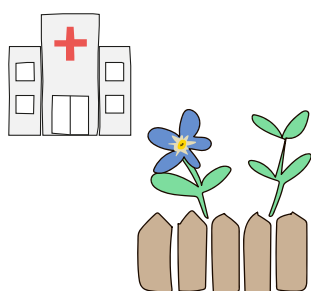
If you receive something upsetting, contact your care team to let them know.

Remembering your baby



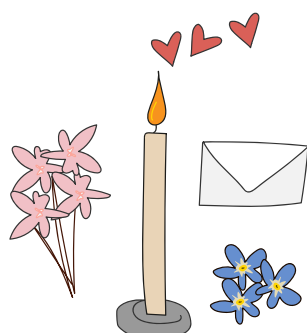
Everyone chooses to remember their pregnancy or baby loss in different ways.

Some people choose not to mark their loss. You should do what feels right for you.



Your hospital might have a book of remembrance, memory garden or yearly service.

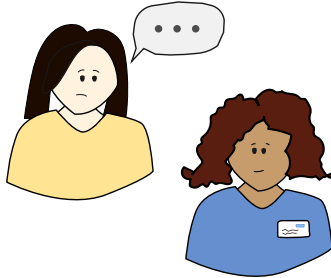
Ask your doctor or midwife for more information.



There is no right or wrong way to remember your baby. Here are some things other families have found helpful:

- Writing a letter to your baby.
- Lighting a candle.
- Buying something special to remember them.
- Planting a tree or flowers.
- Creating a memory box.

Your history



Grief can affect your mental health.

You should tell your doctor or midwife about your mental health history.

This is important even if you have been feeling well for a long time before your loss.

This will help make sure a plan is in place to support you.

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For further support in Sussex after pregnancy or baby loss, see:

Acorn Pregnancy Counselling Centre, Worthing
acornworthing.org.uk

The Haven, Mid Sussex
havencentre.org.uk/index.html

Muma Nurture, Eastbourne
mumanurture.org

National support

Oscar's Wish – Bereavement support for families and children
oscarswishfoundation.co.uk

Petals – Information and support
petalscharity.org

Tommy's – Information and support
tommys.org/baby-loss-support

Cruse Bereavement Support – Help to deal with grief
cruse.org.uk

TFMR Mamas – Support for people affected by TFMR
tfmrmmas.com

Antenatal Results and Choices – Bereavement support for people affected by TFMR
arc-uk.org/for-parents/arc-bereavement-support

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Fertility Network UK – Bereavement support for people experiencing baby loss after infertility

fertilitynetworkuk.org/pregnancy-loss

Support for dads

Daddys with Angels – Information on dealing with child loss

daddyswithangels.org

Aching Arms dad support group – A dedicated helpline and support group for dads

achingarms.co.uk/support-for-you/supporting-arms.aspx

If you do not have internet, you can ask your care team to print you a copy of any resources in this guide.

This guide has been reviewed by service users and support staff as well as lived experience champions and staff of the Maternal Mental Health Alliance.