

Learning About Grief After the Loss of a Newborn

What is grief?

Grief is the emotional and physical process you go through after the death of someone you love. If you know your newborn has a serious problem, you may start to grieve even before your baby dies.

The grief of losing a baby can feel overwhelming. It's more than the loss of a unique person. It's also the loss of your plans and dreams for your baby and your family.

Grieving is a painful process, and it doesn't happen in any set order. It may cause a wide range of emotions. And the emotions may change quickly. For example, you may go from shocked to sad or from angry to numb in a short period of time. You may have trouble thinking clearly or remembering things. Grief can also cause problems like trouble sleeping, headaches, and loss of appetite.

What can you expect in the hospital?

Many people want to spend time with their baby after death. This gives them a chance to feel close to their baby and make memories they can recall later. For other parents, this is too painful.

Only you can know what is right for you and your family. But if you want to, you will be able to:

- See, touch, and hold your baby.
- Bathe and dress your baby.
- Take photos and collect mementos such as a lock of hair.
- Do religious or cultural rituals that are important to your family.
- Have time alone with your baby to say goodbye.

What can you expect of the hospital staff?

When a baby dies, the loss is felt by everyone involved in the baby's care. The hospital staff will do everything they can to help you during this difficult time.

The hospital staff can:

- Help you understand what happened to your baby.
- Discuss the decisions made about your baby's care. This can help you know that you made the best possible choices.
- Help you take photos and gather mementos like footprints, the name bracelet, and the crib card.
- Provide information about funeral or memorial services.
- Help you complete necessary paperwork.
- Connect you with grief support services.

The staff can also help you decide if you want an autopsy. Sometimes an autopsy can reveal important information about a baby's death that was not known before. Some parents find it comforting to know as much as they can.

Where can you get help?

You may feel very alone and cut off from the world right now. When you're ready, it may help to:

- Spend time with people who care about you. Being with loved ones and talking about your feelings may help you feel less isolated.
- Join a grief support group. This is a place where you can share your experiences with other parents who have lost a baby. Many hospitals have these groups. There are also online support groups.
- Talk to a grief counselor or a spiritual advisor. The hospital may have someone on staff or be able to help you find someone to talk to.

People deal with grief in their own ways and at their own pace. For example, some people cry a lot. Others don't cry at all. Differences like this can put strain on a family. Talking to a counselor may help you work through the stress of your loss.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/patiented>

Enter **M954** in the search box to learn more about **"Learning About Grief After the Loss of a Newborn"**.

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