



Are there other options for time with our baby?

Information and resources for bereaved parents about the option to bring your stillborn or deceased baby home.

Yes. You don't have to bring your baby to your home or prepare the whole home funeral in order to see and/ or hold and spend time with your baby. For some families that may feel like an overwhelming responsibility. Families may be limited by health concerns if the mother's health declined during the pregnancy, or families may have other reasons for preferring not to bring their stillborn or deceased baby home. You can request to see and/or hold your baby at the hospital instead. Many hospitals these days will offer bereaved parents the opportunity to:

- See and hold your baby in the hospital.
- Invite family and friends to visit to see your baby.
- Let you bathe and dress your baby.
- Have family photos taken with your baby.
- Make plaster casts or ink prints of your baby's hands and feet.
- Cut a lock of your baby's hair to keep.
- Keep various memorabilia from the hospital, such as your baby's arm tag.
- Have your baby christened or baptized at the hospital.

Most hospitals will initiate offering you these choices, but if your health professionals don't offer you these choices, then let them know your wishes. In addition, if your baby's body has already been sent to a morgue or Funeral Director, you can ask for these details and contact the morgue or Funeral Director to request to view your baby.

You may want to bring a professional photographer to take photos of your baby before burial or cremation. Now I Lay Me Down To Sleep is a non-profit with volunteer photographers who will take photos of your baby if you wish. They may have a volunteer photographer in your city: <https://www.nowilaymedowntosleep.org/>. Heartfelt is another non-profit offering this service in Australia and the UK: <http://www.heartfelt.org.au/>.

It's important that you don't feel pressured to do "the right thing" when it doesn't feel right for you. Choosing to bring your baby home is an option, along with seeing and holding your baby, taking photographs, introducing your baby to family and friends, and all other options listed above and in other baby loss support literature. These choices will only feel good to you if they were chosen by you.

We know from talking to and working with bereaved parents that it is natural to feel afraid and say "no" to choices being offered to us when we're in the midst of shock and grief. Our only advice is to slow down and see how these options feel for you after some time. Decisions you make can be changed within certain timeframes. If you choose not to see your baby, you can change your mind and ask to see him or her. If you choose not to bring your baby home, you can still talk to the funeral director and tell them you have changed your mind. All of these decisions are parenting decisions, and as parents to your precious stillborn or deceased baby, you make the best decision for you at that time, based on what information you have at that time.



The author: Cath Duncan is a Social Worker, Grief Educator at www.griefcoachingcertification.com, author of the grief workbook, "Remembering For Good" (<http://www.rememberingforgood.com/the-book/>), and also a bereaved parent.

For more answers to your questions about bringing stillborn and deceased babies home, go to <http://whenyourbabydies.com/q/>