



# What if other people think it's weird?

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

In some countries around the world, it's the norm to bring your stillborn or deceased baby home for your family and friends to view the body, and so that you as the parents can take care of the body and funeral preparations yourself. But in some parts of the world, with the growth of the professional funeral industry, this practice has become less common. When a practice is outside of the norm, then people may be misinformed about it, or they may have a lot of fears about it. After a baby has died, you and your family and friends may feel especially vulnerable and fearful, so you may need a lot of education and reassurance in order to feel safe to participate in a practice that is new and unfamiliar.

## **Educate yourself about your options and decide what you want.**

As the parents of your deceased baby, it's important to begin with deciding what you want. After your baby has died, there are many different decisions you can make about how you record anything related to your baby's life and death, how you talk about your baby's life and death, what you do with your baby's body, and any funeral or memorial rituals that you may wish to hold for your baby. There's no "right way" to do it, and it's fine if you choose not to bring your baby home. There is no ritual or practice that will take all of the pain away or bring your baby back to life.

The educational pamphlets at <http://whenyourbabydies.com/q/> have been written to address common questions and fears that parents have as they consider the option of bringing their baby home, because it is an option, but in some hospitals and communities it is not a well-known option. Read the pamphlets to learn more about the option of bringing your baby home, and discuss them with your health professionals, your partner, and anyone else you wish, so that you can decide what you want. No matter what you decide, thinking about and making choices about how you want to manage the practicalities after your baby's death, rather than being excluded from these decisions, can help you to express your desires as a parent, and set the tone for how you'll grieve and how you'll live after loss.

## **Consider who you want to invite to participate.**

Bringing your baby home is most beneficial when it can be a community practice where the people who are important to you are involved and supportive, so consider who you would like to involve. Again, there is no "right way". You could choose not to invite any friends and broader family to view your baby's body and keep it an intimate affair with just your partner and your other children. Or you may wish to invite some family members and friends who are important to you to come and see your baby's body. Some people open their house to a big community of people. The number of people you invite doesn't matter. What matters is that you feel good about the people you've invited because they're people who are important to you who will support you.

## **Educate your family and friends to ease their fears.**

Once you've decided who you'd like to invite to visit your home, view your baby's body, and spend time with your family, consider whether these people have any experience with viewing a deceased adult or child's body, what their fears might be, and what information they might need in order to feel comfortable to join you. It can feel very painful if some family and friends who are important to you criticize your desire to bring your deceased baby home, or express hesitation about visiting to view your baby's body, but try not to take their responses personally. Usually friends and family who object to your decision to bring your stillborn or deceased baby home are doing so because of fears which they have. Misinformation or lack of knowledge about the practicalities of handling a deceased's body may be at the root of their fears. They may also be afraid of

viewing a deceased body if they've never viewed one before, they may be afraid because they don't know how they'll react when they see a deceased baby's body, they may be very afraid of death, or they may have had previous experiences with death and grief which they fear will be triggered if they view your deceased baby's body. Even though they love you, some of your friends and family may have great fear that gets in the way of their ability to participate and support your choice to bring your deceased baby home. Try to stay open to letting them express their love and support in other ways that are more comfortable for them, and don't assume that their fear means that they don't love you or recognize your precious baby.

If bringing your deceased baby home is new and unfamiliar to your family and friends, then offer them educational resources to reassure them. We've created educational pamphlets at [BringYourBabyHome.com](http://BringYourBabyHome.com) that are free for you to download and share with your family and friends, and there are video interviews with bereaved parents who brought their baby's home which you can watch.

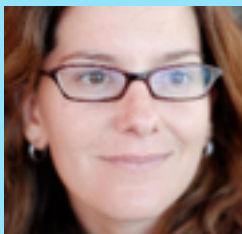
**Ask one of your health professionals to speak with your family/ friends.**

Sometimes family and friends are more reassured when a medical professional addresses their fears and concerns and expresses support for your wish to bring your deceased baby home. While the choice to bring your baby home is not always offered to every family in every hospital, most health professionals are aware of the choice and many would support you to reassure your family and friends if you wish to exercise the choice to bring your baby home. There are also non-profits in many countries that focus on supporting bereaved parents, and many are willing to assist you with advocating for your wishes if your health professionals are not working with you. You can find a list of these support organizations here: <http://whenyourbabydies.com/support-resources/>

**Plan your time at home, and convey these plans to your family and friends.**

When you invite your family and friends to come and visit you and view your baby's body, having a plan for what you'll do together and a plan for where and when your baby's body can be viewed will help your family and friends to feel comfortable participating. You may wish to place your baby's body in a separate room so that when people visit you they can choose whether or not to go into the room to view your baby's body. Or you may wish to make a viewing time so that those who wish to view your baby's body can visit during that time and other people who are less comfortable with the idea of viewing a deceased body can visit you at other times and offer you their love and support in other ways.

If viewing a deceased body is new and unfamiliar to them, be sure to let them know that your deceased baby will be at home with you, so that they're not surprised. When a practice is new and unfamiliar, people may be concerned or uncomfortable because they don't know what the social rules and expectations are for the event. So, whatever your preferred plans, communicate those plans to your family and friends when you invite them to visit you.



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