

Stillbirth

Yarmouth Regional Hospital

What is a stillbirth?

A stillbirth is when a baby dies after the 20th week of pregnancy, during pregnancy, labour, or birth. **There is no way to predict that this will happen.** In Nova Scotia, there are about 6 stillbirths each month. **You are not alone.**

Why might my baby be stillborn?

We can't always answer this question. We will check the baby and placenta after delivery, but there may not be anything wrong that we can see.

You will be asked if you want to have an autopsy done. This may help us find the cause of the stillbirth. Some parents find it helpful to know why this happened. It can also help us to find out if you are at a higher risk for another stillbirth. Sometimes, even with an autopsy, we may not be able to find a reason for the baby's death.

Grieving

It is completely normal to feel many emotions, including:

- › anger
- › sadness
- › bitterness
- › guilt
- › loneliness
- › longing
- › helplessness

These feelings are normal and it's OK to ask for help as you take time to work through your emotions.

Your loved ones may not know how to help you, especially if they are also grieving. They may even say things that are hurtful, because they do not understand what you are going through.

Sometimes just a few simple words like, "I'm sorry", is enough.

Unfortunately, people may think it's helpful to ignore or hide from grief. You may need to explain your grief to people who you normally trust and lean on. Ask your family and friends to let you express your feelings and just listen – a simple phone call to check in with you can help. Take your time – everyone is different in how they work through their grief.



How do I cope?

Grieving takes a lot of energy and time, but it is needed for healing.

Here are a few things to think about that may help you.

- Working through/showing your grief instead of keeping it bottled up inside can help. If you do not show your grief, it may take longer to heal.
- Use a journal to express your feelings.
- Remember your baby. Talk about your baby. Include them in conversations.
- Create a memory box for your baby with items that remind you of them, such as ultrasound pictures, cards, etc.
- Plant a tree in your baby's memory.
- Remember that you are not alone. Talk to your partner and lean on your friends. Let others help you.
- Contact a support group in your community.
- Ask if your employer offers employee assistance in times of crisis.
- If you have a spiritual faith, seek support from your faith community.
- Read books and resources that have been recommended by others who have experienced loss.
- Keep in mind where you are in your grief when reading or listening to advice from others. Your need for support and info will change over time as your grief changes.
- Have faith that as you work through your grief, **you will feel better.**
- Call 211 to find out how to connect with other sources of support in your community.

Suggested reading

Check your local public library for books about stillbirth and losing a child.

- A Silent Sorrow - Pregnancy Loss: Guidance and Support for You and Your Family by Ingrid Kohn and Perry-Lynn Moffit (1993)
- When a Baby Dies: A Handbook for Healing and Helping by Rana K. Limbo and Sara Rich Wheeler (1998)
- Surviving Pregnancy Loss: A Complete Sourcebook for Women and Their Families by Rochelle Friedman and Bonnie Gradstein (1992)
- Empty Arms: Coping with Miscarriage, Stillbirth and Infant Death by Sherokee Ilse (1992)
- www.aplacetoremember.com
- www.sidelines.org/index.php/information/articles/pregnancy-loss

Support group

Tri-County Pregnancy Care Centre
Stillbirth Counselling
342 Main Street, Yarmouth, NS
Phone: 902-742-3865
Email: tcpcc@ns.aliantzinc.ca

