

Spending time with your baby

Although it can be a hard thing to face, you will have to decide whether to spend time with your baby or not after the birth. It is your choice whether or not you do this, but it can be an important step in your journey of grieving. If you choose to do it, it will be hard and upsetting but it is also very special. Parents have said that this has helped them cope with the grief later.

Recognising your baby as a real person is important. Take time to create memories and acknowledge your baby's existence in the world.

Hold your baby

After the birth you'll be able to choose whether you see, and hold, your baby. This is a very personal choice and one you can discuss with your midwife.

Years ago many women were not allowed to see their babies. Some are still sad they never had this chance. Think about how you feel now, but also how you might feel in the future.

If you're frightened about what your baby might look like, you can ask your midwife to describe your baby to you first, or take a photo for you to look at before you make the decision. You might choose to just see your baby's hand or foot. Your midwife can help you with this.

Remember that it is OK to change your mind. Don't hold back from asking to see your baby even if you have already said no. If it is possible the hospital staff will help you. 'It's normal to change your mind. Any decisions you make around seeing or not seeing your baby doesn't need to be final. Even if you don't want to see your baby, having a photograph (even on a memory card), or a memory box you don't open, is better than regretting your decision not to have anything at all.

Spend time with your baby

You might want to dress your baby in particular clothes, wrap your baby in a special blanket or give your baby a bath

You might want to sleep with your baby in a cot next to you for the night. The hospital can provide a special cool cot for this.

Take as much time as you need. It is your child, and your decision. It is up to you who is with you and who is not. You will get support from hospital staff.

Some parents decide to take their baby home with them. Legally you can do this, unless a coroner or procurator fiscal has ordered a post mortem.

Ask your midwife for information about this. You will need to fill in a form and find out how best to keep your baby cool at home.

This is your time, your baby, your memories – and you will know what's best for you and your family.

You may decide to name your baby. If there is any uncertainty around your baby's sex, you could choose a unisex name.

After being discharged from the hospital, you can still arrange to return to the hospital to see your baby. Contact the labour ward, mortuary or bereavement midwife who can arrange this for you. When the time comes for your baby to go to the mortuary, you can carry him there. This gives you the chance to meet the people caring for your baby.