

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

We will ask if you want to have an autopsy done. This may help to find the cause of the stillbirth. Some parents find it helpful to know why a stillbirth happened. It can also help 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 your baby's death.

Grieving

It is common to feel many emotions, including:

- › Anger
- › Bitterness
- › Loneliness
- › Helplessness
- › Sadness
- › Guilt
- › Longing

It is OK to ask for help as you take time to work through your emotions.

Your loved ones and support persons 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.

Some people may think it is helpful to ignore or hide from grief. You may need to explain your grief to people who you trust and lean on. Ask your loved ones to listen as you express your feelings. A simple phone call to check in with you can help. Take your time. Everyone works through their grief differently.



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.

- It can help to work through and show your grief instead of keeping it inside. 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.

- Make a memory box for your baby with items that remind you of them (like ultrasound pictures, cards).
- Plant a tree in your baby's memory.
- Remember that you are not alone. Let others help you.
 - › Talk to your partner about how you are feeling.
 - › Lean on your friends and loved ones.
 - › Contact a support group in your community.
- Ask if your employer offers employee assistance.
- If you have a spiritual faith, ask for 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. As your grief changes over time, your need for support and information will change too.
- Call 211 to find out how to connect with other sources of support in your community.

Know that as you work through your grief, you will feel better.

Suggested reading

Check your local public library for books about stillbirth and losing a child. Here are some suggestions:

- *A Silent Sorrow - Pregnancy Loss: Guidance and Support for You and Your Family* by Ingrid Kohn and Perry-Lynn Moffitt (2000)
- *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 (1996)
- *Empty Arms: Coping with Miscarriage, Stillbirth and Infant Death – Surviving the First Hours and Beyond* by Sherokee Ilse (2008)

Support groups

Stillbirth Counselling

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

Grief Support Groups in Nova Scotia

- › <https://hospicehalifax.ca/grief-support-groups-in-nova-scotia/>

Postpartum Support International (Online support groups)

- › www.postpartum.net/get-help/psi-online-support-meetings/

