



Information following a therapeutic termination of pregnancy

Information for parents from Women's Health

We apologise if this leaflet reaches you at an inappropriate time for you and your family. The decision to terminate a pregnancy, at whatever stage, can be difficult. We want to offer you all the care and support we can. This leaflet explains:

- how our Trust treats both early and mid-term therapeutic terminations; and
- describes some of the support available for you and your family.

What is a therapeutic termination of pregnancy?

Therapeutic termination is the termination of pregnancy for fetal abnormality.

What happens following an early pregnancy loss? (Up to 15 weeks and 6 days gestation)

Unless the mother tells us otherwise, all early pregnancy losses will receive a communal cremation. This involves individual losses being cremated together at Thanet Crematorium on the last Thursday of each month*. Each individual loss is identified personally.

If you wish to attend the service, please contact the Chaplaincy Office to find out which month your loss will be included. The Chaplaincy Office contact numbers are listed at the end of this leaflet.

Please note that following the communal cremation, ashes are not returned to parents. Ashes are scattered in the Baby and Child area of St John's Cemetery (next to Thanet Crematorium).

It is your personal choice whether you attend this ceremony. You will be supported in whatever you decide to do. More information about this simple, confidential, and respectful service is available from the hospital chaplains. The Chaplaincy Office contact numbers are listed at the end of this leaflet.

If for religious, cultural, or any other reason you are unhappy with these arrangements, you will need to contact the Chaplaincy Office within 2 weeks of your loss. The chaplains will be pleased to discuss other options available at no cost to you and your family.

*Should this fall on a public holiday, the ceremony will normally take place on the last working day before at the same time and place. We recommend that you confirm this with the hospital chaplains.

Please note that very early losses are sometimes difficult to identify, either visually or by scientific investigation. Therefore, in some rare cases, the loss may not be included in the communal ceremony. This does not prevent you or your family attending the service as part of your grieving process.

What happens following a mid-term pregnancy loss? (16 to 23 weeks and 6 days gestation)

Parents may choose:

- individual cremation
- individual burial; or
- communal cremation (as mentioned in the previous paragraph).

You will need to complete and sign certain paperwork, so we can proceed with the arrangements.

Your baby will be included with the early losses in the monthly communal cremation ceremony, if you:

- do not tell us which option you prefer within 3 weeks of your loss; or
- let us know that you do not wish to be involved in any way whatsoever.

Parents may, of course, make their own private arrangements and would need to sign certain documents saying that this is their wish. In such cases, families will be expected to meet all the financial costs involved.

You are strongly advised to contact the hospital chaplains around 2 weeks after your loss, if you have:

- agreed to a post-mortem examination; and
- have chosen communal cremation* for your baby.

This is because the investigations may still be awaiting completion, and your baby may have to be included in a later ceremony.

*The communal cremation ceremony is held on the last Thursday of the month at Thanet Crematorium. Please note that following the communal cremation, ashes are not returned to parents. Ashes are scattered in the Baby and Child area of St John's Cemetery (next to Thanet Crematorium).

If you wish to attend the service, please contact the Chaplaincy Office to find out which month your loss will be included. The Chaplaincy Office contact numbers are listed at the end of this leaflet.

*Should this fall on a public holiday, the ceremony will normally take place on the last working day before at the same time and place. We recommend that you confirm this with the hospital chaplains.

Will there be any cost involved?

If the hospital is making the arrangements, the Trust will cover all basic costs of a cremation or burial.

If you wish, you are welcome to make your own private arrangements, and

- use an alternative funeral director
- book limousines for family transportation; or
- place private commemoration.

These costs would have to be met by the family.

What about memorial books and services?

There are memorial books in the chapels of our hospitals in Ashford, Canterbury, and Margate. If you would like your baby's name entered, please contact one of the Chaplaincy Offices. There is no charge for this service.

In addition, we hold an annual baby memorial event. Many parents have found this to be both a healing and helpful experience. If you would like us to contact you with details of this event, please let your nurse, midwife, or doctor know. Alternatively you can contact the Chaplaincy Office using the contact details listed below.

Helping us to help others

We hope this leaflet has been helpful and reassuring to you at this difficult time. It is a painful and sensitive subject to raise with parents and families who can be experiencing a wide variety of feelings and emotions. We are always looking to improve the care we give to parents and families like yourselves, no matter how or at what stage the pregnancy ended. We welcome any comments - positive or negative - that you may have on the help and support we have offered during your time of loss. We wish you well for the future and assure you of our continuing care and concern.

Contact numbers

- **Kent and Canterbury Hospital, Canterbury**
 - Chaplaincy Office
Telephone: 01227 864095
 - Bereavement Support Officers
Telephone: 01227 864006
 - Women's Health Counsellor
Email (ekhuf.t.womenshealthcounsellors@nhs.net)
 - Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)
Telephone: 01227 783145
- **Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother (QEQM) Hospital, Margate**
 - Chaplaincy Office
Telephone: 01843 234273
 - Bereavement Support Officers
Telephone: 01843 234452

- Women's Health Counsellor
Email (ekhuft.womenshealthcounsellors@nhs.net)
- Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)
Telephone: 01227 783145

- **William Harvey Hospital, Ashford**

- Chaplaincy Office
Telephone: 01233 633331 extension 723-8014
- Bereavement Support Officers
Telephone: 01233 616887
- Women's Health Counsellor
Email (ekhuft.womenshealthcounsellors@nhs.net)
- Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)
Telephone: 01227 783145

- **Other helpful contacts**

- Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society (SANDS)
Telephone: 08081 643332
- Child Bereavement
Telephone: 08000 288840
- Miscarriage Association
Telephone: 01924 200799

This leaflet has been produced with and for patients.

Please let us know:

- If you have any accessibility needs; this includes needing a hearing loop or wanting someone to come with you to your appointment.
- If you need an interpreter.
- If you need this information in another format (such as Braille, audio, large print or Easy Read).

You can let us know this by:

- Visiting the Trust web site (<https://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/ais>).
- Calling the number at the top of your appointment letter.
- Adding this information to the Patient Portal (<https://pp.ekhuft.nhs.uk/login>).
- Telling a member of staff at your next appointment.

Any complaints, comments, concerns or compliments, please speak to a member of your healthcare team. Or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service on 01227 783145 or email (ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net).

Patients should not bring large sums of money or valuables into hospital. Please note that East Kent Hospitals accepts no responsibility for the loss or damage to personal property, unless the property has been handed into Trust staff for safe-keeping.

Further patient information leaflets are available via the East Kent Hospitals' web site (<https://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/patient-information>).

Reference number: RK/EKH117

First published:
September 2003

Last reviewed:
September 2025

Next review date:
January 2029

Copyright © East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust.