The Sudden Loss of Your Baby: A Support Resource

We are so sorry for your tremendous loss. This handout is designed to help connect you to grief support resources, provide some key information about what happens next, and give information about why an infant may die suddenly and unexpectedly in their sleep.

What is Grief?

Grief is how our minds and bodies respond after losing someone we love. The grief of losing a child suddenly and unexpectedly can be intense. You may struggle to understand how this happened, and how to cope with these feelings. Your anger, sadness, confusion, hurt, guilt, and/or numbness are all valid and important to process in your own time. There is no right or wrong way to grieve, and no timeline. It is important to be kind to and patient with yourself and to lean on others for support and help.

Grief Support Resources

Your family and friends will likely each experience grief in their own way. Something that can help with processing grief is seeking support from others who have experienced the loss of a child, a faith leader, or a licensed mental health support professional. Please scan the QR code for some resources that may be helpful to you on your journey.

Resource List

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What Happens After A Sudden & Unexpected Loss: A Guide for Families

1. Scene Investigation
Because your child's death was sudden and unexpected, the county medical examiner and/or law enforcement may examine the scene. This is a standard part of the death investigation. It is not meant to blame anyone.

2. Autopsy and Review of Medical Records
To help find out why your child died, the medical examiner will likely order an autopsy and review your child's medical records. It may be helpful to stay in contact with the Regional Autopsy Center for the latest updates.

3. After the Autopsy
Once the autopsy is completed your child's body can be picked up by the funeral home or location of your choice. You will not be asked to travel to the Regional Autopsy Center.

4. Death Certificate and Autopsy Report
Finalizing the death certificate with an official cause of death can take time. You can ask for copies from the Register of Deeds in the county where the death happened, or the State Vital Records Office for a fee. Funeral homes can often help with this process.

Autopsy reports are available for free through the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner's website. Finalizing them may take time. Please know these reports may be graphic, hard to read, and may not give answers. They are not meant to cast blame. For questions or help understanding these reports, your family doctor or child's pediatrician may be helpful.

Additional Information:
You can find more information and helpful resources from the North Carolina Office of the Chief Medical Examiner through this QR code:
For questions or updates on your child's investigation **you may call the NC Office of the Chief Medical Examiner at 919-743-9000 or 800-672-7024, then press 3.**

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How Did This Happen?

In North Carolina, Sudden and Unexpected Infant Death (SUID) during a sleep period is the third leading cause of infant death. For more information about what can lead to infant death during sleep, you can visit Safe Sleep NC's website via the QR code:

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