

Losing a child is an unthinkable devastating event. Some families express the desire to know the facts on why this has happened. We have designed this pamphlet to give you general information about your loss, any further questions should be discussed with your nursing staff or doctors.

### INTERNET RESOURCES

The M.I.S.S. Foundation  
[www.missfoundation.org](http://www.missfoundation.org)

Share Pregnancy and Infant Loss, Inc.  
[www.nationalshareoffice.com](http://www.nationalshareoffice.com)

Share Pregnancy and Infant Loss, Inc.  
[www.nationalshareoffice.com](http://www.nationalshareoffice.com)

M.E.N.D. - Mommies Enduring Neonatal Death  
[www.mend.org](http://www.mend.org)

H.A.N.D - Helping After Neonatal Death  
[www.handonline.org](http://www.handonline.org)

The Compassionate Friends  
[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

The March of Dimes  
[www.marchofdimes.com](http://www.marchofdimes.com)

October 15th: Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day  
[www.october15th.com](http://www.october15th.com)

Babycenter Grief and Loss Bulletin Boards  
[www.babycenter.com/306\\_pregnancy-infant-loss\\_1517042.bc](http://www.babycenter.com/306_pregnancy-infant-loss_1517042.bc)

Angel Babies Forever Loved  
[www.angels4ever.com](http://www.angels4ever.com)

A Place to Remember  
[www.aplacetoremember.com](http://www.aplacetoremember.com)

**A Small Victory**  
26953 189th Ave. SE  
Covington, WA 98042  
[www.asmallvictory.org](http://www.asmallvictory.org)

turning misfortune  
into memories

aSMALLVICTORY™  


[www.asmallvictory.org](http://www.asmallvictory.org)

Facts About  
Neonatal Loss

This pamphlet is about neonatal death which is the death of a baby during the first 28 days of life.

## **HOW OFTEN DOES THIS HAPPEN?**

In the United States, there is approximately one neonatal death for every 218 births, which is roughly 19,000 neonatal deaths each year.

## **CAUSES OF NEONATAL DEATH**

### **Respiratory Distress Syndrome**

Premature babies, especially those born at less than 32 weeks of pregnancy and weighing less than 3 1/3 pounds, often develop respiratory distress syndrome (RDS). About 23,000 babies develop RDS each year.

Babies with RDS have immature lungs that lack a protein called Surfactant that keeps small air sacs in the lungs from collapsing. Treatment with surfactant has greatly reduced the number of babies who die from RDS. However, about 880 babies a year die in the neonatal period due to RDS.

### **Bleeding in the Brain**

About 25 percent of babies born preterm, usually before 32 weeks of pregnancy, develop bleeding in the brain called intraventricular hemorrhage (IVH).

### **Premature Birth**

Premature birth (before 37 completed weeks of pregnancy) is the most common cause of neonatal death. Prematurity and its complications cause almost 30 percent of neonatal deaths. The earlier a baby is born, the more likely he is to die. About 20 to 35 percent of babies born at 23 weeks of pregnancy survive, while about 50 to 70 percent of babies born at 24 to 25 weeks, and more than 90 percent born at 26 to 27 weeks, survive.

About 12 percent of babies are born prematurely. The causes of premature delivery are not thoroughly understood. In some cases, a pregnant woman may have health problems (such as high blood pressure) or pregnancy complications (such as placental problems) that increase her risk of delivering prematurely. Women who have had a previous preterm delivery, are pregnant with twins (or other multiples), or have certain abnormalities of the uterus or cervix also are at increased risk. More often, preterm labor develops unexpectedly in a pregnancy that had been problem-free.

### **Infections**

Premature babies have immature immune systems and sometimes develop serious infections such as pneumonia (lung infection), sepsis (blood infection), and meningitis (infection of membranes surrounding the brain and spinal cord). In spite of treatment with antibiotics and antiviral drugs, some babies die.

### **Birth Defects**

Birth defects cause about 21 percent of neonatal deaths. Babies with birth defects may be premature or full-term. There can be structural birth defects, such as spina bifida (open spine), anencephaly (brain and skull defect), and heart or kidney defects. Or chromosomal abnormalities, such as Down syndrome, and many genetic birth defects. Some babies are born with both structural defects and chromosomal abnormalities.

Other causes of neonatal death include problems related to: Complications of pregnancy, Complications involving the placenta, umbilical cord and membranes (bag of waters), Infections, Asphyxia (lack of oxygen before or during birth).

## **AFTER YOUR LOSS**

### **Your Baby**

The hospital staff should take time to explain to you what the hospital offers and should also give you written information. You do not have to make a decision right away, nor does the decision have to be totally up to you. Discuss it with your family and friends and take your time. Many families decide to have a small memorial service for their babies. This can be helpful to everyone, especially siblings and those that were not at the hospital and never had the chance to say good-bye.

### **Your Body**

Please remember that you just had a baby, please be kind to your body. Following your delivery you will have some bleeding and possibly period-like pain, and this may continue for several weeks. If the bleeding or pain increases or you have discharge that looks or smells offensive, or you are worried about any other symptoms, call your doctor immediately. You should have your first period approximately four weeks after your bleeding stops.

Your breasts may naturally produce milk. For many this is distressing and may even feel cruel. It is important not to stimulate your nipples or express milk from your breasts; this will only cause more milk production. Wear a well-fitting supportive bra 24 hours a day for the first two weeks. For discomfort you can apply ice packs several times a day for 20 minutes at a time.

### **Your Mind**

The "blues" are normal after a normal pregnancy and even more prevalent after a loss. This is totally normal and caused by changes in your body. If the blues don't get better with time or you are having harmful thoughts please contact your doctor. There is support available online and through your hospital.