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

Share Pregnancy and Infant Loss, Inc.
www.nationalshareoffice.com

The National Stillbirth Society
www.stillnomore.org

The International Stillbirth Alliance
www.stillbirthalliance.org

The Compassionate Friends
www.compassionatefriends.org

Missing Angel Foundation
www.missingangel.org

October 15th: Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day
www.october15th.com

Babycenter Grief and Loss Bulletin Boards
www.babycenter.com/306_pregnancy-infant-loss_1517042.bc

Angel Babies Forever Loved
www.angels4ever.com

A Place to Remember
www.aplacetoremember.com
This pamphlet is about stillbirth which is also known as fetal death or fetal demise. In most states a stillbirth is an intrauterine (within the womb) death that can occur after the 20th week of pregnancy all the way up to birth. The “stillborn infant” is born without any attempt at respiration, including a beating umbilical cord. Even a post-term baby who dies one minute prior to birth is considered a stillborn.

HOW OFTEN DOES THIS HAPPEN?

In the United States, there is approximately one stillborn baby for every 115 live births, which is roughly 26,000 stillbirths each year. Actual numbers are unknown due to lack of standardization in recording stillbirths. More babies are lost to stillbirth than all other forms of infant death combined.

FINDING A REASON

Most families want to know the reason for their stillbirth and most hospitals offer some investigations - although the investigation may not provide clear answers. Even after extensive evaluations the cause of stillbirth cannot be determined in 50 percent of all cases. After delivery an autopsy examination can be carried out. The baby, placenta and umbilical cord will be examined carefully with hope to discover the reason of death. Even if the cause of death cannot be determined, most parents find comfort in knowing one way or the other, especially when planning for future pregnancies.

If you wish, the nurses can explain what happens to your baby during an autopsy. The examiners are extremely careful. Even after your baby is autopsied you may still have an open casket service if you wish.

CAUSES OF STILLBIRTH

Birth Defects
About 15 to 20 percent of stillborn babies have one or more birth defects. Nearly half of these have chromosomal abnormalities, such as Down syndrome. Others have birth defects resulting from genetic, environmental or unknown causes.

Placental Problems
Placental problems cause between 10 and 20 percent of stillbirths.

Poor Fetal Growth
About 20 percent of stillborn babies have poor growth.

Infections
Infections involving the mother, baby or placenta appear to cause about 10 to 25 percent of stillbirths. Infections are an important cause of stillbirths before 28 weeks of pregnancy. Some infections may cause no symptoms in the pregnant woman and may go undiagnosed until it is too late.

Chronic Health Conditions
About 10 percent of stillbirths are related to chronic health conditions in the mother, such as high blood pressure, diabetes and kidney disease.

Umbilical Cord Accidents
Accidents involving the umbilical cord may contribute to about 15 percent of stillbirths.

Other causes of stillbirth include trauma (such as car accidents), postdate pregnancy (a pregnancy that lasts longer than 42 weeks), Rh disease (an incompatibility between the blood of mother and baby), and lack of oxygen during a difficult delivery. These causes are uncommon.

AFTER THE STILLBIRTH

Your Baby
Most states require stillborn babies to be buried or cremated. 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. You will also be issued a “Fetal Death Certificate” from the state, you may need to contact Vital Statistics and pay a small fee. Most parents find comfort in this because it has your baby’s name on it. Some states also offer a “Certificate of Birth, Resulting in Stillbirth” or a “Certificate of Stillbirth”. Again, your Vital Statistics office would have information for you on this matter.

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.

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.