

What happens next...  
immediate advice after the  
death of a baby.



Little Things & Co.

The baby bereavement charity

## If your baby has just died, we send you our sincere condolences.

The pain, shock and utter disbelief is overwhelming. It is a cruel twist of nature that even though a baby has died we still have to go through labour and deliver our baby. Here you will find help and advice for immediately after you have received the devastating news.

You will probably be wondering how you came to be thrust into this new reality. There will be time to process this shock. Your baby has died but you need to be aware that the decisions you make now can affect your grieving process. However, there is such a short time to make certain choices and decisions, they need to be informed and every option made available to you. We aim to guide you on the very immediate next steps.

*All the advice provided here has been researched from other parents who have been where you are now.*

### **During labour, giving birth and delivering your baby.**

Although your labour is not going to be as you planned it is important you are given choices and are permitted to make decisions about what will happen.

There may be medical reasons why certain decisions are made for you, but things you can control are; the music that is played, who is permitted to be in the room, what pain relief you are given and what information you wish to hear. Ensure you voice your requests and they are met.





**After your baby has been born**

As during labour, the time after your baby's death will undoubtedly be a sad one, however there are things you can control. Ensure the professionals caring for you are told if you are to be handed your baby immediately, who is to cut the cord and if you wish to see your baby. It is important to say here that you will probably have a mixture of emotions at this point. A sense of pride in giving birth, sadness that your baby has died and pure wonder at how they look and their features (if you choose to hold and see them).

.....  
**Making memories**

There is such a short space of time after a baby dies to make memories with them. Our leaflet 'Making Memories' gives a comprehensive guide, but the following are options.

- Take photographs of your baby
- Have hand and footprints taken
- Read them a story
- Bathe and dress them
- Take a lock of their hair

**Deciding on a post mortem**

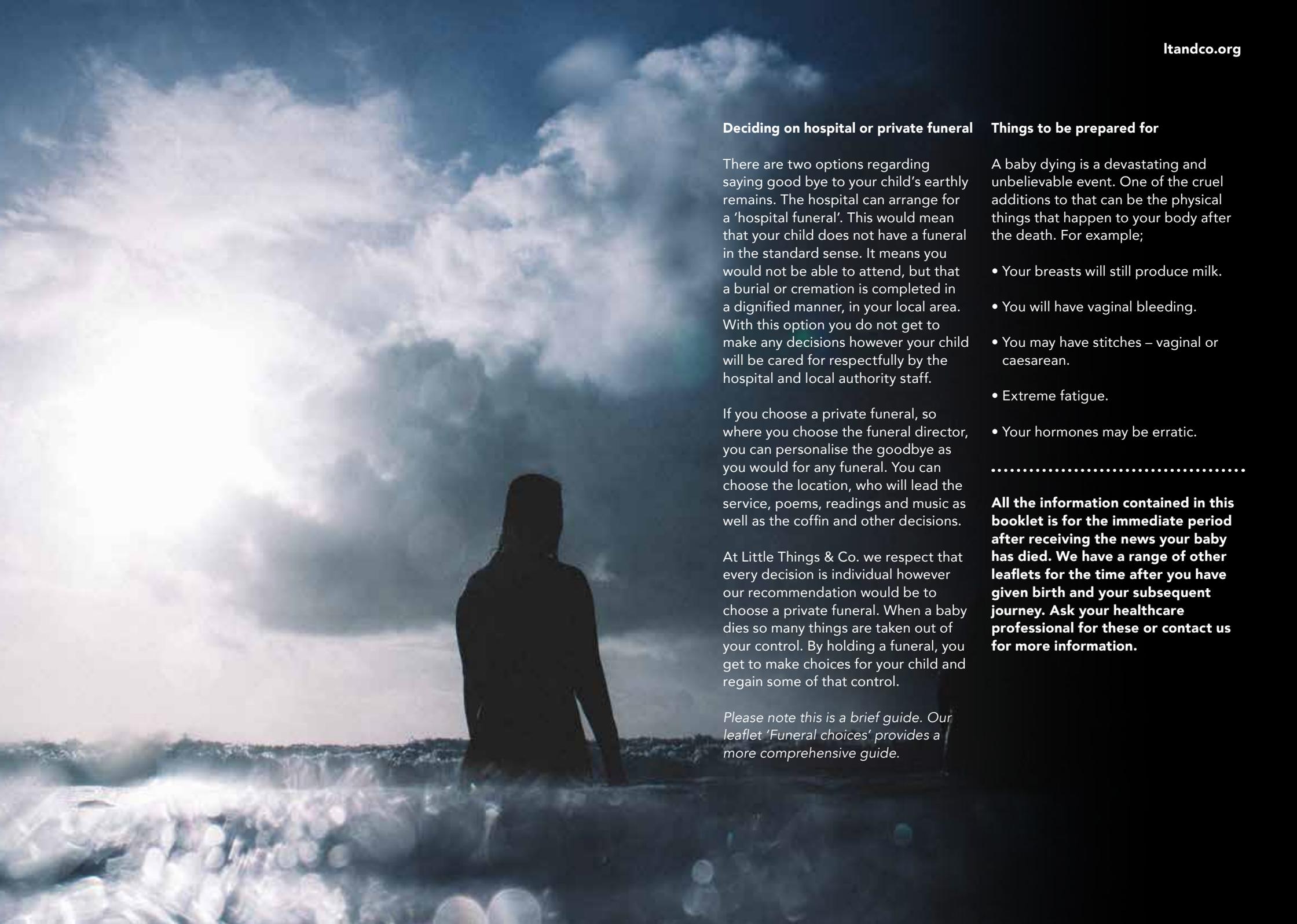
Sadly, this is one of the only decisions you will get to make for your child and it is a very big one.

A post mortem examination is when your baby's cause of death is investigated by a paediatric pathologist. It is a dignified procedure to establish why your baby died. It could mean that your baby has to leave the hospital you are in and travel to another, as paediatric pathology is only practised in certain hospitals. The transportation of your baby will be carried out with care and respect.

It could also mean that it takes some time (often 4-6 weeks) and could delay a funeral. However, it is the only option to try and establish why your baby died. It is worth noting that sometimes a post mortem will find no actual cause. You can be left without a reason.

If you do decide on a post mortem, ensure you tell the health professionals caring for you to note how you would like to receive the results. If you do not state that you would like a consultation they may arrive by post, without warning. This can cause much anxiety and upset. Ensure you state exactly how you would like to hear the results.

We recommend if you would like to see your baby, doing so, before they go for a post mortem. Over time their appearance may change and viewing before is the best option.



**Deciding on hospital or private funeral**

There are two options regarding saying good bye to your child’s earthly remains. The hospital can arrange for a ‘hospital funeral’. This would mean that your child does not have a funeral in the standard sense. It means you would not be able to attend, but that a burial or cremation is completed in a dignified manner, in your local area. With this option you do not get to make any decisions however your child will be cared for respectfully by the hospital and local authority staff.

If you choose a private funeral, so where you choose the funeral director, you can personalise the goodbye as you would for any funeral. You can choose the location, who will lead the service, poems, readings and music as well as the coffin and other decisions.

At Little Things & Co. we respect that every decision is individual however our recommendation would be to choose a private funeral. When a baby dies so many things are taken out of your control. By holding a funeral, you get to make choices for your child and regain some of that control.

*Please note this is a brief guide. Our leaflet ‘Funeral choices’ provides a more comprehensive guide.*

**Things to be prepared for**

A baby dying is a devastating and unbelievable event. One of the cruel additions to that can be the physical things that happen to your body after the death. For example;

- Your breasts will still produce milk.
- You will have vaginal bleeding.
- You may have stitches – vaginal or caesarean.
- Extreme fatigue.
- Your hormones may be erratic.

.....

**All the information contained in this booklet is for the immediate period after receiving the news your baby has died. We have a range of other leaflets for the time after you have given birth and your subsequent journey. Ask your healthcare professional for these or contact us for more information.**

This booklet has been prepared and sponsored by Little Things & Co. – The baby bereavement charity.

Little Things & Co. is a registered charity (1165463) who provide emotional and practical support to anyone suffering the loss of a baby.

Little Things & Co. believes the bereavement care after losing a child should be seamless, thoughtful and helpful.

If you would like to discuss anything you have read within this booklet please do not hesitate to get in touch.

To find out more about the work they do visit **[www.ltandco.org](http://www.ltandco.org)** or email **[info@ltandco.org](mailto:info@ltandco.org)**

