

Thinking
about having
another baby

One of the questions that you might ask yourself after the death of a baby is whether you will ever be able to have another baby. Family and friends might try to cheer you up by encouraging you to think about this as an option. However, it is important to grieve in the way that you need for the baby who has died and to think about another baby if and when this is right for you.

Having another baby



If you do decide that having another baby is the right decision for you, it is best to wait until any medical issues have been resolved. These could include underlying conditions for the birth mother, illness during the previous pregnancy, or scars from the birth. You might also want to wait until the birth mother's six-week check-up before you try again. Your baby's post-mortem examination might also reveal specific problems so consider this information before trying for another baby.

If you find that you or your partner is pregnant, it could feel very difficult to share the news of your pregnancy or allow yourself to get excited about having a baby. As with grief, you and your partner may

not experience these feelings about a new pregnancy at the same time, which can be challenging. Having had experience of loss, you will be aware in a very personal sense that not all pregnancies end happily. If you have other children, they might remember the time that their sibling died and, like you, be afraid that this might happen again.

You might find that your child re-visits conversations that were held at the time that their sibling died with further questions and feelings. It's important to see what the child remembers and try to fill in any gaps in their understanding if you can. If this feels too distressing for you, perhaps a family member or friend can help.

Antenatal care

Some parents choose to go back to the same maternity unit while others do not want to re-live the memories of their baby's death in the same place. If you do not have the choice to go to another hospital, and find the prospect of attending the same hospital too distressing, you can ask to be under the care of a different consultant and a different team of midwives from the ones you had previously. It is natural to want to be extra cautious and to feel very anxious. If there is anything about your pregnancy that is worrying you, it is essential to tell a member of your healthcare team. In addition to the usual antenatal clinics, some maternity units run special clinics or drop-in sessions for bereaved parents who are expecting another baby, where they understand the anxiety and pain of a new pregnancy and can provide extra reassurance and check-ups.

If you are the birth mother, you might feel especially anxious throughout and this can be particularly hard when you reach the point in your pregnancy when your previous baby died. You can ask for extra checks to help reassure you. Your notes should be marked with a special sticker or alert to indicate that you have

had a baby who died. Sands provides special stickers or alerts to health professionals to use. This helps them be more aware that you might need extra care. If you go to antenatal classes, tell the person facilitating the class that your previous baby died. They can then be sensitive to your needs and understand why you might have additional concerns to some of the other parents who attend the class.

Relating to the new baby

For most parents, planning a nursery and choosing clothes for a baby they are expecting is an exciting experience. When your previous baby has died, it can be difficult to feel confident enough to make preparations for the arrival of your baby. Again, you can speak to someone about your anxieties and maybe ask a family member or friend for practical help in putting together a hospital bag or going shopping for baby clothes and equipment with you. You may feel more comfortable to wait until after your baby is born before you make any extra preparations.



You might also feel afraid of loving the new baby or forming strong attachments until you are confident that the baby is alive and well. It is totally natural to have these fears. You might also find that you are extremely protective of the new baby when they are born. Think about what you would like from your birth plan and what those caring for you need to know.

When you choose not to have another baby

Experiencing the death of a baby whom you dearly wanted and loved does not mean that you will automatically want to try to have another baby. Equally, you might decide not to have another baby straight away but decide to try to have one later. If you're feeling unsure, give yourself enough time and space to consider what is best for you. You may be unsure for a long time before you make a decision.

There may be both adults and children around you who will assume that you want to have another baby and this could feel painful for you. They might be grieving in their own way and feel that another baby would help their own grief. While this might be true for them, you are under no obligation to meet others' expectations, or to help others cope with their grief. You also do not have to find a reason such as ill health or infertility to explain why you are not trying to have another baby.

You may want to grieve for the baby who has died and how you feel as a parent towards that baby rather than thinking about any future parenting. You might also not want to experience any risks and complications that you had to experience with the baby who died, or any health problems that you might have developed as a result of being pregnant. In addition to these concerns, you might not want to risk future loss. The thought of future loss can feel very frightening.

If you do not want a baby but your partner does, try to resolve this as you would any other issue in your relationship. The death of a baby can have a huge impact. It might be helpful to arrange couples therapy to help you talk through some of your feelings and the impact of the loss on your relationship.

For the partner who does want another baby, having this denied can feel like a further loss. For them, it can be important to find a way to say goodbye to the baby who has died but also to those babies they imagined they might have. If you have had IVF, there might be embryos remaining. Deciding not to have another baby can feel especially difficult and cause conflict as these embryos could be implanted. It might be possible to donate the embryos for use by other people or for research if you wish, however, this may still create feelings of loss that will need to be processed. Your IVF clinicians will be able to discuss options with you.

We're too scared to try again. Too scared another loss would break us. It hurts. We'd love another child, not to replace the ones we've lost but because we feel our home isn't full yet. We've tried but the IVF hasn't worked. We're doing our best. For some of us a rainbow baby isn't coming.

Natalie

When it is not possible to have another baby

Not all parents will have the option of trying to have another baby. Sometimes there are medical or personal reasons why another pregnancy is not possible, such as the mother's health, age or the couple's relationship. Parents who had IVF may need to decide whether they are able to bear the emotional and financial costs of going through this process again.

In these situations, it is best to think about where to receive support. Attending a support group for parents who have experienced the death of a baby might be useful in many ways; however, there might also be parents who announce that they are expecting another baby. This can create feelings of jealousy, anger, or provoke a further sense of loss.

The grief of wanting another baby and knowing that this is not possible might compound the feelings of loss for the baby who has just died. Working on a one-to-one basis with a counsellor who can support you through this grief may be more helpful than attending a group. Some Sands groups have been set up specifically for those parents who are expecting another baby, thereby allowing other groups to support parents solely through their experience of loss. It is important to explore the right option for you. The Sands Bereavement Support Team are experienced in supporting parents in many different situations and our Online Community is an opportunity to share experiences and ideas with other parents in similar situations.

