After you leave the hospital

When you have returned home, you may wish to…

- Contact other family members and close friends
- If there are other children who were close to your child, consider their grieving process
- Discuss the choice of a funeral home with close family and friends
- Contact your minister, priest, rabbi, or Imam (if you have one) who will assist you with funeral arrangements
- Notify the school(s) that any children attend for additional support
- Have a relative/friend answer the phone, help with phone calls, and also to keep a list of all calls, flowers, and food donations.
- Determine if you would like donations made to an organization or charity in memory of your child.

Dear Family Members and Friends,

Please accept our deepest sympathy regarding the death of your child.

We, at Baystate Medical Center and Baystate Children’s Hospital, believe that the care of our patients includes care and support to their family and friends. We would like to offer you this informational brochure as a means of providing further support to you at this very difficult time. We hope you find the information helpful and comforting.

You are in our thoughts, and we trust you will take care of yourself during this time of loss, grief, and healing.

Sincerely,

Nancy Rines
Director,
Baystate Children’s Hospital & Women’s Services

The Rev. Ute Schmidt
Manager,
Spiritual Services
Baystate Medical Center
Responding to Grief
You will need time to adjust and to deal with the many emotions that will be part of your healing process. This process is not an easy one and will take time.

In response to your grief, you may:

- Feel tightness in the throat or heaviness in the chest.
- Have an empty feeling in your stomach and lose your appetite.
- Feel guilty at times and angry at others or yourself.
- Feel restless and look for activity but find it difficult to concentrate.
- Feel as though the loss isn’t real, that it didn’t actually happen.
- Sense your child’s presence, like finding yourself expecting him/her to walk in the room or hearing his/her voice.
- Wander aimlessly, be forgetful, or be unable to finish tasks you’ve started.
- Have difficulty sleeping or dream of your child frequently.
- Feel guilty or angry over things that happened or didn’t happen in the relationship with your child.
- Feel as though you need to take care of other people who seem uncomfortable around you by your proximity.
- Feel your mood change over the slightest things.
- Cry at unexpected times.

These are natural and normal grief responses. It’s important to cry and talk, and to reach out for help from family, friends, or professionals whenever you feel you need help.

As you go through this process, it might be helpful to keep the following in mind:

Caring
Others may want to offer their support during this time; they may seem uneasy as they try to express their sympathy to you. Try to keep in mind that this is their way of showing you that they care for you.

Small Pleasures
There is healing in the small pleasures of life. Take the time to experience things you took for granted before you loss. Allow yourself a special meal while watching a favorite movie. Follow what feels like healing to you and what connects you to the people and things you love.

Setting Goals
For a while, it may seem that much of life is without purpose or meaning. You will find yourself taking one day at a time as part of your healing journey. At some point, it may be helpful to set some short-range goals, such as getting some exercise or having lunch with a friend.

As time passes you will be able to set some long-range goals to give your future some purpose and structure. Don’t be afraid to ask for professional guidance to help in your planning process. Getting back into a routine can be very stabilizing and creates structure for your day-to-day life.

Stepping back as we step forward
There will be periods of “ups and downs” for you. Sometimes, after a period of feeling good, the sadness returns. You may even experience periods of anger and helplessness. Do not be alarmed or discouraged if these feelings come and go. You will need time to process your grief, and only with time will everything become comfortable for you.

Anniversaries and holidays may bring up feelings of sadness and grief. You may feel particularly anxious about how to live through the holidays. You may want to celebrate differently than before. Remember to treat yourself with kindness and love and stay close to those who care about you.

How your physician can help
Sometimes, we need temporary medication to help us through the initial grieving process. Medications are designed to help initially, but generally are not intended for long-term use. Be careful with your use of alcohol. Alcohol is a depressant and can heighten feelings of sadness or loss. Please consult with your physician about medications and the use of alcohol and other stimulants.

LOCAL & REGIONAL RESOURCES
For Adults...

- Aiding Mothers and Fathers Experiencing Neonatal Death (AMEND) Offers free counseling services to parents who have experienced the loss of an infant through miscarriage, stillbirth, or neonatal death. amendgroup.com 314-487-7582

- Baystate Visiting Nurse Assoe. & Hospice Contact the Hospice Bereavement Coordinator Marianne Power: marianne.power@paystatehealth.org 413-794-6411

- Comfort Zone Camp A free camp for children who have experienced the loss of a parent, caregiver, or sibling Mass@ComfortZoneCamp.org 866-488-5679

- Massachusetts SIDS Center Infant & Child Death Bereavement Program 800-641-7437

- SHARE Support Group for Families For families who have experienced a stillbirth, miscarriage, or neonatal loss. 2nd Wed of each month, 7:30pm 3300 Main St., Springfield 413-562-1731

- The Garden: A Center for Grieving Children & Teens 286 Prospect Street Northampton, MA 01060 413-584-7086

- Rick’s Place, Inc. Wilbraham Activities-based bereavement support program rickspiacema.org 413-348-3120

For Children...

- Aiding Mothers and Fathers Experiencing Neonatal Death (AMEND) Offers free counseling services to parents who have experienced the loss of an infant through miscarriage, stillbirth, or neonatal death. amendgroup.com 314-487-7582

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