

Discussing Authorised (Hospital) Post Mortem Examination After Stillbirth or Neonatal Death



The Conversation

- The death of a baby is difficult for everyone.
- Know what a post mortem examination involves before you talk to parents.
- Consider asking your local pathologist for support.
- Explain why parents might wish to consider a post mortem – you could say: *'It may help to explain or give a reason as to why your baby has died'* or either *'It may help you prepare for a future pregnancy'* or *'It may reveal information that could impact on any future pregnancies that you may have'*.
- Indicate that you know these conversations are difficult.
- Do not make assumptions about who will consider a post mortem.
- Explain that a post mortem need not necessarily delay their baby's funeral.
- Babies can be taken home before or after a post mortem examination.
- Give parents a clear point of contact for the post mortem examination results.

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The Procedure

- Babies are looked after and respected at all times.
- Post mortem examinations are usually performed within 2 working days.
- Different types can be performed including invasive and non-invasive.
- Examining the placenta is important.
- All organs will be returned to the body unless the parents have given authorisation for more in depth investigations which may take longer.
- Samples may be taken for histology, bacteriology, virology, genetic and DNA testing.
- Afterwards, any incisions will be closed and not visible once the baby is dressed and wearing a hat.
- The results will usually be available in 6–8 weeks.

Please visit **www.sad.scot.nhs.uk** to watch a short animated film on this topic and for other educational resources on death, dying and bereavement for health and social care professionals.