

Cosmetics can be used to give a more natural appearance after embalming, although they are not often used for children. This should not be done without your express permission.

Whether you decide on embalming or not, some other points of care are also important.

A 'cold cot' is available for your use at home. This is a discreet mattress that can go into a moses basket or cot and is available from the bereavement midwife.

Rooms should be well ventilated and kept as cool as possible to help delay changes in the body. Scented candles, aromatherapy burners etc may help to keep the air in the room fresh. With much to think about at this difficult time, it is important to take extra care in the use of candles and burners.

During hot weather, or if it is difficult to keep the room cool, it may be best to take your child to the funeral directors after 2-3 days, although this is not always necessary if the cold cot is used (embalming will reduce potential difficulties). The Bereavement Service can advise on this.

Finally, take care of yourselves; our thoughts are with you. If you need any further support or have questions and need advice or help please talk to us.

Useful numbers

- Royal Berkshire Hospital switchboard
Tel: 0118 322 5111
- Royal Berkshire Hospital Bereavement Service
Tel: 0118 322 7059
- Royal Berkshire Bereavement Midwife
Tel: 0118 322 7215, Mobile: 07500 123 912 (non-urgent. Please contact 0118 322 7215 if urgent)
- Child-Death Helpline
Tel: 0800 282 986
- Child Bereavement Trust
Tel: 01494 568900

Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust
London Road
Reading RG1 5AN
Telephone 0118 322 5111
www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

Clinical Standards Directorate, June 2019
Review due: June 2021

Caring for your child at home

Information for families who are considering taking their child home before the funeral

We'd like to do all we can at this difficult time, by offering advice and support for you and your family. If you would like to talk through this advice, or have any concerns, please contact the Bereavement Co-ordinator or Bereavement Midwife.

This advice has been prepared with the assistance of parents and those with experience of bereavement within the Trust. We hope you find it of help in thinking of what is best for you and your family. Some of what we say has to be direct so you may wish to consider reading on with the support of a relative, friend or religious contact (priest, vicar, rabbi etc), or of course the staff here at the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust.

Parents and carers have an absolute right to look after their child at home before the funeral if they wish to do so; except in cases involving an infectious disease, or where their child's death has been referred to the Coroner.

Where the Coroner is involved, it may still be possible to look after your child at home, once official documentation has been issued.

Why go home?

You, your family and friends may find it helps to say goodbye in the natural environment of home rather than at hospital on the ward or in the viewing room. Being able to see and touch your child in privacy and in home surroundings can help overcome some of the fears, apprehension and emotions associated with your loss.

You may find yourselves in the role of comforter to others visiting in the days following the loss of your child. If you feel more at ease with your surroundings, you may feel better able to support others around you and this may help you to grieve in your own way.

Some families are more comfortable deciding to leave their child in the hospital and visiting them in the viewing room. Much will depend on your own personal needs and circumstances.

You've decided to take your child home

Quite apart from the organisational arrangements to be made, the following advice may be helpful for you to continue looking after your child.

You may wish to wash and dress your child. This can be done at the hospital in a ward area or when you get home. Alternatively, you may prefer your chosen funeral director to help.

When going home, you can make collection arrangements with the mortuary (0118 322 7743). Collection times are 9am-1pm and 2pm-3pm Monday to Friday **by appointment only**. If this is not possible, or if you prefer, funeral directors will help with arrangements for the journey home.

The mortuary is open 7am to 4pm Monday to Friday excluding Public Holidays. Outside of these hours please contact the duty mortuary technician via hospital switchboard (0118 322 5111).

In preparing the room at home, you may want to arrange toys, photographs, candles, flowers or mementos, to make the room familiar, special and more comfortable.

What else is important to know?

It is very important to keep, as far as possible, the right conditions when looking after your child at home, to reduce or avoid any further upset.

Embalming helps preserve the conditions of your child's body, especially if your child is to remain at home until the funeral, or there is any potential for delay before the funeral. This is best carried out at the funeral directors. Although most funeral directors will embalm at home, this could be quite distressing, so is probably best done at the funeral directors.