



FAMILY-CENTRED CARE FOR FAMILIES WHO EXPERIENCE PERINATAL LOSS

Supporting families through loss and grief is an integral part of Family-Centred Maternity and Newborn Care. Perinatal loss includes infertility during the preconception period, fetal death during pregnancy (miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, induced abortion and stillbirth) and infant death in the first year of life (neonatal or post-neonatal death).

Principles for the care of families that experience a loss

1. Individualized care is provided to meet bereaved parents' personal, cultural and religious needs.
2. Compassionate communication with parents is important both before and after their loss.
3. Parents are given the information and support they need to make informed decisions about their own and their baby's care.
4. Accept and validate parents' feelings and make no assumptions about the intensity and duration of their grief.
5. Parents are cared for in an environment they feel is appropriate and private.
6. Ideally, the same health care providers (HCPs) are responsible for providing care during and following the loss.
7. The support meets the needs of partners or support people and families.
8. Parents have opportunities to create memories of their baby.
9. Parents are helped in performing rituals they consider important.
10. The remains of babies and fetuses are always treated with respect. Options around sensitive care and disposition of the baby after death are discussed.
11. Effective interdisciplinary communication is essential to ensure that all health care team members have accurate and current information.
12. Ongoing support is an essential part of care and is available to everyone, including during a subsequent pregnancy and after the birth of another baby.
13. HCPs involved in the care of bereaved parents have opportunities to develop and update their knowledge and skills, and have access to emotional support for themselves.

For references consult **Chapter 7: Loss and Grief** in: Public Health Agency of Canada. Family-Centred Maternity and Newborn Care: National Guidelines. Ottawa (ON): PHAC; 2020.

For more information about the **Family-Centred Maternity and Newborn Care: National Guidelines**, or to download this document, please search "maternity and newborn care" on **CANADA.CA**.