

Days until the funeral

The days until the final farewell are hectic, confusing, loving, busy, complicated. In short, everything at once. You may want to let people get to know your baby but there are also a lot of things that need to be arranged. You want to rest from your delivery but you don't like lying in bed alone.

The law states that there must be at least 36 hours and a maximum of six working days between the death and the funeral. [Here](#) you can see what the latest date for the funeral is.

We have listed some things for you to think about and give you some guidance. But the most important thing is: listen to your feelings. You can only use these days once. Cherish them and use them to make memories.

Arrange for a funeral director

You may choose whether or not to ask a funeral director to assist you. Many parents who choose a funeral director want specialized funeral care. The death of a newborn baby requires a different approach and there are other options and possibilities than with a deceased adult. In the Netherlands, there are specialist funeral organizations that focus specifically on deceased children and two organizations that focus specifically on welcoming and saying goodbye to babies who have died during pregnancy or around birth. You can find specialist funeral organizations [here](#).

Maternity care

You have become a mother of a beautiful child, but you have also just come out of labor. It is therefore important to get the right help during this period and to continue to take good care of yourself. For the time being you are and will remain a woman just out of labor, and you too need the standard check-ups, care and pampering. The maternity nurse can also play a role in caring for brothers and sisters. Explain the situation to the maternity care organization so you get an experienced maternity nurse.

The maternity assistant can not only give you mental support over the next few days but can also take care of your baby when you decide to take him/her home. She can tell you what your baby looks like after one night, help with dressing or bathing and take care of the maternity visits.

In addition to standard check-ups, she can also give advice on the breast engorgement that can occur and she will keep a maternity book. Often maternity care organizations have a separate maternity book for parents with a deceased baby, where the standard check-ups of the baby are left out so that you are not confronted with these empty pages when you want to read through the report of the maternity days again at a later time.

When your baby is born still, you automatically get fewer hours than parents with a living baby. The reason for this is that the baby needs less care and you do not need to be guided in breastfeeding and caring for your baby.

"My maternity nurse kept a diary with short observations of the days when Stef was with us, from her perspective. This diary is still very valuable to read back."

*Geke, mother of Eva and Stef**

It is also possible that you have no need for a new or strange person in the house. Your midwife will visit you a couple of times for the follow-ups.

To go home or not?

Because besides saying goodbye, you also want to welcome your baby, many parents choose to take their child home with them. This gives you the time to get to know your child. You can go there at any time of the day, you can hold your baby, you can read or sing to him, you can easily show the people around you your baby and you can take care of your baby yourself (e.g. give him a bath, rub him with baby oil or put on clothes).

When you decide to take your baby home, you can transport him/her in your own car. This can be in your arms on your lap, in the Maxi-Cosi or in a baby carrier. You can also choose to have the funeral director take care of the ride home.

"We were very nervous about taking Amy home or holding her at first, but we did it and it helped us a lot. After all, you make sure that the love for your child is central during the time your baby is with you. Looking back on such a loving period made the mourning a lot more bearable for us."

Tessa and Joost, parents of Amy.*

Baby cooling

At home, your baby must of course be cooled. This can be done with a special cooling mattress that the funeral director can install. You can put your baby in its bed, but also on the dresser, in the playpen or in a basket. If you do not want to use a cooling mattress, you can also use cooling elements. You will need to replace them every few hours. The funeral director will keep an eye on your baby over the next few days and provide care when needed. Do not hesitate to pick him/her up, hug and kiss him/her. However, it is important to put your baby back on the cooling unit regularly.



Water method

A very new way is the water method. Your baby comes out of the (amniotic) water and thus remains the most natural in this situation. Especially for small children who die in the first and second trimester of pregnancy, this is a beautiful way to have your child with you until the funeral. In the water, your baby gets a nice light color and looks relaxed. You can read all about it at www.watermethode.nl.

View our photo album [here](#). All parents have given permission for these photos to be published. It is not allowed to distribute the photos from this album, other than with our explicit permission.

Embalming

Thanatopraxy is a way of temporarily preserving a body. This is done by introducing a liquid into the body. No cooling is then required. With this light embalming, the fluid will at first stop the decomposition process completely so that your baby will remain beautiful until the funeral. After a few days, the fluid will lose its effect and the natural process will continue. Unfortunately, thanatopraxy is not possible for premature babies (the water method gives a much nicer result) and for babies that have died in the womb and whose skin has been damaged. If in doubt, the thanatopraxist can give you an answer about the possibilities.

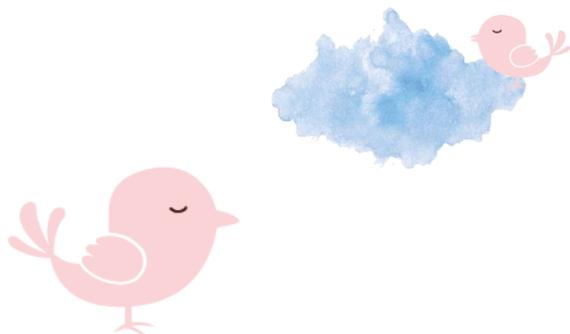
Burial or cremation?

One of the first choices parents have to make is between burial and cremation. Perhaps this explanation will help you make your choice.

Buried

There are many different kinds of cemeteries. Perhaps you already have a cemetery in mind that suits you. Most cemeteries have a separate children's section, where only babies and young children are buried. Often this is a brightly decorated area. At some cemeteries you can choose your own spot. It is good to take advantage of this so you can choose a spot that feels good. So take your time.

When your child is buried, you can slowly lower the basket or coffin into the grave yourself after the farewell service. Many cemeteries have graves for babies. One of the parents can then step into the grave and the other parent can hand over the basket or coffin.



Cremation

When you decide to cremate your baby, he will be burned in his casket or basket to a fine ash. These ashes can be buried, scattered or kept at home. Some parents like to keep the urn at home and have a special place where they can light a candle.

Another option is to scatter the ashes in a place that is meaningful to you. You can then separate a small amount of ash to use in a piece of jewelry, for example.

Burying the ashes is also possible. Most cemeteries have such a special urn field, but not all. So be sure to ask the cemetery about this.

If you have plans to live abroad in the future, this may be a reason to choose this option.

There is a statutory waiting period of four weeks before the ashes can be collected from the crematorium. In exceptional cases (e.g. when leaving the country), the funeral director can request the public prosecutor to collect your baby's ashes earlier.

In the event of a death under 24 weeks and if there is no documents that is called "permission for cremation" (verlof tot cremeren), it is sometimes possible to collect your baby's ashes sooner.

Each baby receives his or her personal identification number in the form of a fireproof stone. This stone always remains with the ashes and thus ensures that there can be no mix-up of the ashes and you will always receive the correct ashes.

Location of funeral service

You can rent an auditorium at the cemetery or crematorium where you can hold a service, but you can also choose a more intimate setting. This depends entirely on the number of people. Most cemeteries and crematoria have family rooms or living room auditoriums which are much smaller and more intimate than an auditorium. You can also choose to hold the service at home or at a nice location nearby (church, café, beach club, community center, sports canteen, funeral home).

Declaration

When your baby has not lived outside the womb, you have to declare a stillborn child with the local authorities. You can do this yourself but you do not have to. You can get someone from your family or friends to do it or get your funeral director to do it. For this you need an A and B declaration forms that you can get from the doctor.

If your baby did live outside the womb, a declaration of birth and death must be made. The declaration of birth must be made by someone who was present at the birth. The declaration of death can be done by anyone who has the right papers. You will need an A and B declaration forms, which the doctor will give you.

Funeral insurance

With most funeral insurers, children are co-insured free of charge on the policy of the future parents after a certain number of weeks of pregnancy. This can be either the mother's or the father's policy. The parents have to be married or the father has to have acknowledged the baby. If the acknowledgement has not yet taken place, this can always be done at the same time as the declaration of death. If your baby was stillborn or died shortly after birth, you can report the death to the insurance company. They will then tell you what the insured amount is. Your funeral director can also call about this. If your baby was born alive and did not die immediately, it is important to add your baby to your policy immediately. Your baby is automatically insured for a while, but with some insurers this period expires after 30 days. We list the policies of a number of large insurers on our website.

Basket/box

The days up to the funeral, your baby can lie in his crib, but for the funeral or cremation you will have to choose a basket, coffin or shroud. There are many organizations that make baby baskets and caskets, but you can also make or buy something yourself. Any wrapping is fine as long as the contours of the body are not visible. So you can also wrap your baby in a cloth.

Photos

Since you do not have any pictures of your baby apart from the ultrasound pictures, it is important to capture as much as possible. You can do this yourself, the people around you can also help you and there are [foundations](#) that come and take professional photos free of charge.

Videos

Moving images have a different impact than photos. We therefore advise you to make some videos as well as photos. You could then make a remembrance film of them later on. You can of course do this yourself with your camera or mobile phone, but you can also leave it to professionals.

Birth announcement

Many parents prefer to choose a birth announcement card rather than a bereavement card. Perhaps you have already chosen a nice birth announcement card. Then you can adapt it to a birth-bereavement announcement card. You would like to announce the birth of your child, but unfortunately you cannot avoid mentioning that your child is no longer alive. If you have not yet chosen a birth announcement card, the funeral director will have many examples for you to choose from. If you are holding a farewell service and want to mention this on the card, you need to hurry. In this case we advise you to use a so-called "mourning mailing set" containing the cards with a mourning seal ([for more information read here](#)). This way the cards will reach friends and family even faster. But you can also invite people digitally (via e-mail or Whatsapp) to the farewell service and think about the card afterwards, when there is no more time pressure.

After the farewell service, it is nice to be able to occupy yourself with your child again. The card also generates new attention and it is nice to receive many cards (or messages) again after the farewell. You can also think about sending a thank-you card.

Visit

Many parents say they want to keep everything small. This is understandable because nobody knows your baby yet, so it sounds contradictory to let people say goodbye to someone they don't know. But you can let people get to know your baby. If people have seen your baby and maybe even held it, it will be easier for them to talk about it later and they will understand your feelings better. This also creates more (and shared) memories.

It is wise to also inform the people around you who will not be visiting about what has happened. This will prevent you from getting all kinds of well-meaning messages asking how you and the baby are doing. You can also ask the people around you to arrange this for you.

Making memories

Since you have no memories yet, you could use these days to make memories. You dreamed of a future with your baby and those dreams have collapsed. But you can still try to fill in the things that are still possible.

If you still want to read to your baby, it is nice to capture this on video. Moving images with sound have even more impact than photos. If you already have children, they will probably find these videos very valuable when they grow up.

Funeral arrangements

You will also use these days to plan the day of the funeral. When and where do you want the funeral to take place? Don't plan this farewell day too soon because then there won't be enough time to make memories and you'll also need to factor in time for physical recovery. Take into account other children's naps, meal times and other practical matters. If people have to come from far away, very early in the morning is not ideal. It is also important to think about who you will ask to be present at the farewell. Do you want many or few people? Do you want only family or also friends? Who is going to speak, what music are you going to play?

