

What happens now?

**red
nose**
grief and loss

My child died suddenly.
This brochure explains
what will happen next
for you and your child.



Why am I being asked so many questions?

You may be asked a lot of questions about your child's medical history and what happened by a lot of people, and sometimes more than once.

This is because there are standard forms and protocols to follow. The information you give will assist in understanding why your child died.

Why are the police involved?

Police are involved in all sudden and unexpected deaths. Their role is to gather factual information for the coroner and forensic pathologist.

The police will come and talk to you about your child and what happened. They may also arrange for forensic investigators to come and examine/ photograph your child.

The police may collect items such as bedding, your child's blue book or their formula, to gather as much information as possible for the coroner about the situation around the time your child died.

You will need to formally identify your child for the police. They will then prepare a report for the coroner. This is normal procedure required by law.

Where will my child go?

Your child will first be taken to hospital (if they are not already there).

You may have the opportunity to spend time with your child at the hospital. Your child will then be taken to a Forensic Medicine facility and be examined by a doctor called a forensic pathologist. Forensic Medicine social workers will make contact with you to explain the process and timeframes.

A forensic examination may be completed to look for possible cause of death. This is a normal procedure required by law.

Your child will be taken to one of the closest of the following forensic medicine facilities:

- **Lidcombe** - Forensic Medicine and Coroners Court Complex, 1A Main Avenue, Lidcombe
- **Wollongong** - Wollongong Hospital campus, Loftus Street, Wollongong
- **Newcastle** - John Hunter Hospital campus, Rosella Close, New Lambton Heights

This will be organised by the police or coroner.

There are some things you might not be able to do until after the forensic examination process has finished.

For example, spending time alone with your child, or touching them. This is to give the forensic pathologist the best chance to find out what happened to your child.

Social workers from the Forensic Medicine facility will be in contact with you while your child is in their care. They will let you know if your child needs to be examined to try to understand why they died, and what this examination will involve. If the coroner proposes an examination, but you don't want it to happen, you can object in writing. Social workers can assist with this process if required. The coroner will consider your objection, but they make the final decision about whether an examination is done.

What happens after the forensic pathologist's examination?

After the forensic examination process has finished, your child will be released into the care of a funeral home. One hard thing is that there are no set time frames for this to happen.

The social workers are there to support you and keep you informed about when your child will be released. The time for this process may vary, but the Forensic Medicine social workers will keep you updated throughout. They can also support you to see and spend some time with your child, and create mementos (e.g. taking foot/handprints or a lock of hair), which you may not have been able to do earlier.

After your child has arrived at the funeral home, you can hold a memorial or funeral, and burial or cremation. If you wish, you can begin to plan the funeral earlier. If you are using a funeral director, let them know that your child is with the Forensic Medicine facility, so they can communicate with each other.

After your child is released to you, the forensic pathologist and Forensic Medicine facility will continue their work to understand how and why your child died. Forensic Medicine facility staff should remain in contact with you to explain what is happening. They may have more questions for you about what happened. They will produce a final report. The whole process may take months or years. This is hard.



For support services and important contacts, please turn over...

Forensic Medicine support services

The Forensic Medicine facilities have a support service for families. They can assist you and your family with emotional and practical support, information, resources and referrals.

Forensic Medicine contact

Sydney - 02 9563 9000

Newcastle - 02 4935 9700 (Mon - Fri)
or 02 4921 3000 (weekends 1:00 - 5:00pm
- ask for a Forensic Medicine social worker)

Wollongong - 02 4925 4501 (Mon - Fri)
or 02 4222 5000 (weekends 1:00 - 5:00pm)

Grief, infant loss and crisis support services

These services may be able to support you at this difficult time.

Red Nose / Sands 1300 308 307

24/7 grief and loss support after the death of a baby or child including miscarriage and stillbirth

LifeLine 13 11 14

24/7 crisis support and suicide prevention

MensLine 1300 78 99 78

24/7 support for men

The Compassionate Friends 1300 064 068

24/7 support for a family after a child dies

Hospital contact

The person who you should contact at the hospital is:

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Police contact

The officer in charge is:

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Your notes & other contacts

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