

The MISS Foundation

Caring for Women and Their Babies

The M.I.S.S. Foundation was founded in 1996 and is an international non-profit 501(c) 3 organization which offers immediate and on-going support for families experiencing the death of a child from any cause. We offer local support groups, bilingual support, resources, free funeral planning, peer counseling, newsletters, camps for grieving kids, and a wonderful website (www.missfoundation.org).

We also believe strongly in community education and awareness. We offer various programs that range from healthy baby education to bereavement support to annual conferences and seminars for medical professionals helping provide psychosocial intervention to grieving families. For more information, please contact the National MISS Foundation offices at 623.979.1000 or your local office:



P.O. Box 5333
Peoria, Arizona 85385
623-979-1000 main office
623-979-1001 fax
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M.I.S.S. FOUNDATION

*Caring for women
and their babies...*

Stillbirth: What Every Woman Needs to Know



623.979.1000

M . I . S . S . F O U N D A T I O N

About Stillbirth:

Stillbirth is the death of an infant in-utero and past 20 completed gestational weeks. It can happen before or during the onset of labor and can happen to any woman. About 1 in 100 pregnancies will end with the death of a baby to stillbirth or about 30,000 per year in the United States alone.

Many full-term stillbirths occur to low risk mothers and **approximately 40% of stillbirths occur with no diagnosable cause of death.** These deaths are called Sudden Antenatal Death Syndrome, or SADS. This means that a baby has died at or near term for no explainable reason.

The most common diagnosable causes for stillbirth include:

- **Placental problems:** Women who smoke cigarettes have a much greater risk of placental abruption. High blood pressure (preeclampsia) also increases the risk of abruption. Other problems with the placenta, which prevent it from supplying the infant with enough oxygen and nutrients, may also increase the risk of stillbirth.

- **Birth defects:** Between 5 and 10 percent of stillborn babies have chromosomal anomalies. Others may have structural anomalies which can result from genetic, environmental, or unknown causes.

- **Intra-Uterine Growth Restriction (IUGR):** Infants who are not growing at an appropriate rate for their gestational age are at an increased risk of stillbirth due to hypoxia (lack of oxygen) both before and during birth.

- **Infections.** Bacterial infections often cause no symptoms in the pregnant woman and may go undiagnosed. These infections increase the likelihood of stillbirth or premature birth.

Education + Awareness=Reduction

Scientists and physicians do not fully understand the causes of many stillbirths. We do know that at this time, stillbirth cannot be prevented or predicted. However, there are some helpful strategies for pregnant women to follow to help *reduce the risk* of stillbirth:

1. Around 26 weeks of pregnancy, begin doing daily "**kick counts.**" If you count less than 8-10 kicks during a two-hour period or if the baby is moving less than usual and you are concerned, contact your doctor immediately.
2. Do not smoke, drink alcohol, or use drugs (unless prescribed by your physician).
3. Report any vaginal bleeding, leakage, or sharp pain to your health care provider.
4. If you are post-term, be sure to discuss your options and concern with your physician. Pregnancies which last longer than 42 weeks gestation may be at greater risk of stillbirth.
5. It may be necessary to request a second or even a third opinion during your pregnancy to put your mind at ease. Your caregivers should be empathic and respectful of your concerns and you have every right to expect the best care for you and your baby.

NOTE: This information is not intended to replace you doctor's advice . This is for informational purposes only. Please call your physician if you have any other questions.

The Difficult Questions?

What if it happens to me or someone I know?

Though the chances of having a stillborn baby are decreasing in most states, it is helpful to know who to call for help. The MISS Foundation has volunteers who can help you or someone that you know who may be going through this tragedy.

Will I still have to go through labor if my baby dies? Most often, yes. Even if a baby is stillborn before the onset of labor, most women will experience labor and childbirth in the same way as a "live" birth. Having adequate pain control options, supportive family members, and birth assistants or doulas can help ease the overwhelming emotional and physical pain of stillbirth.

Will I get to see my baby? Yes. We encourage women and their families to see, hold, and touch their baby. You may participate in bathing and caring for your baby after his or her birth. Although it may difficult, most families are very grateful that they had those special moments with their baby. A volunteer with the MISS Foundation can help guide and support you during this time.

Will my baby get a birth certificate? Yes, Several states recently began offering this to parents. Call the Office of Vital Records in your state and tell them you'd like to obtain a "Certificate of Birth resulting in Stillbirth." For more information, please contact info@missfoundation.org or 623.979.1000.

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