

Your baby's post-mortem examination

We are so sorry for your loss.

You have been given this information sheet because you have consented to a post-mortem examination of your baby. This examination will help us learn as much as we can about why your baby died.

Your healthcare team will have discussed your options for further investigations with you.

You should have also been given other written information, including *Deciding if your baby should have a post-mortem examination*. If not, you can ask for a copy. Or you can scan the QR code at the end of this information sheet to read it.

This information sheet explains what happens next, where the examination will take place and who to contact for more information.

What happens after you agree to a post-mortem?

After you have spent some time with your baby, your healthcare team will let the Victorian Perinatal Autopsy Service (VPAS) coordinator know your baby is ready for the post-mortem examination. The VPAS coordinator will arrange the transfer of your baby to the specialist site for the examination.

You can contact the VPAS coordinator from the time your baby leaves your care. They are there to answer your questions and keep you informed with as much information as you want. You will find their details at the end of this information sheet.

Where will the post-mortem take place?

Your baby's post-mortem examination will take place at:

- The Royal Women's Hospital, Parkville (Royal Children's Hospital Pathology)
- Monash Health, Clayton (Monash Pathology)
- The Mercy Hospital for Women, Heidelberg (Austin Pathology)

How long does the post-mortem take?

The post-mortem examination will begin with external tests, such as x-rays or MRIs. These tests will be done as soon as possible, but it might take a few days, depending on when those services are available. After these tests are complete, the internal examination (surgical procedure) can occur. The internal examination will take approximately three hours.

We understand it's important for you to know how long your baby will be in our care, as this may affect your plans for your baby's funeral.

Once your baby is at the specialist site, the VPAS coordinator can give you a more accurate idea of when your baby will be returned to you.

What happens after the post-mortem?

When we finish the post-mortem, we will work with your funeral director to safely and respectfully transfer your baby from our care to theirs.

Can you see your baby after the post-mortem?

Yes. Some parents choose to spend time with their baby after the post-mortem examination, either while their baby is in the care of the funeral director or, in some cases, at home.

This is a personal decision for your family.

If your baby has a full or limited post-mortem, the perinatal pathologist (doctor) will make surgical openings (incisions) to examine their tissue and organs. After the examination, they will carefully close these incisions. Once your baby is dressed, the incisions will not be visible.

When will you get the results of the post-mortem?

After the post-mortem examination, the perinatal pathologist will write a detailed report explaining what they found. The report is usually completed within 10 to 12 weeks, depending on the tests needed, and how long it takes to get the results.

The report will be sent to the doctor who cared for you and your baby. They will arrange a follow-up appointment with you to discuss what was found during your baby's post-mortem examination.

Bereavement support and information

If you need more information and support, please speak with your healthcare team.

You can scan these QR codes for information on:

Bereavement resources



VPAS Family information



Contact the VPAS coordinator if you need more details

T [1800 841 024](tel:1800841024)

E VPAC@thewomens.org.au

Hours

Monday–Friday
9:00am to 5:00pm.