Intermountain Health

Fetal Remains Care Options: Miscarriage before 20 weeks

When a pregnancy ends, there are many emotions to deal with. And there are questions that must be answered about how to manage the remains of your pregnancy. The State of Utah requires that we explain the process for taking care of these remains. This fact sheet provides that information as well as an explanation of Intermountain's procedures.

Our hope is that you will find comfort in having a clear direction in which to turn. Our team is here for you. Please don't hesitate to ask any questions you may have.

What does Utah law say about managing the remains of your pregnancy?

The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) says that you have the right to decide what you would like to do with the remains of your pregnancy in the case of a **miscarriage.**

> UDOH: You have the right to decide what you would like to do with the miscarried fetus. You may decide to have your healthcare provider be responsible for disposition of the fetus. The provider may dispose of the miscarried fetus by burial or cremation. You can ask your healthcare provider if you want to know the specific method for disposition.

Know that Intermountain will honor your wishes. Read further to learn about other decisions you may need to make after your pregnancy ends.

What is a pathology exam, and should I request one?

When a pregnancy ends before 20 weeks, the remains of the fetus or embryo can be sent to a **pathologist** [path-AWL-uh-jist] (an expert in identifying tissue abnormalities) to make sure that the tissue is fetal tissue. This is especially important when the loss happens at home or outside of the hospital.



A pathology exam can give you and your doctor a better understanding of why the pregnancy ended. It can also help you to know if there will be a risk of another loss in the future. Unfortunately, in many cases, they can't find a sure cause for the loss.

Pathology exams are recommended for any loss that happens outside the hospital, after some D&C (dilation and curettage) or D&E (dilation and evacuation) procedures, and for losses after 20 weeks of the pregnancy. Talking with your healthcare provider will help you decide if a pathology exam is the right choice for your situation.

What will happen to the remains of my pregnancy after the exam?

After the pathology exam, the hospital will care for your fetal remains.

- However, you may choose to have your fetal remains sent to a mortuary of your choice for cremation or burial at your expense. We can provide a list of mortuaries for your information, but you will need to contact the mortuary and make arrangements directly with them. For losses that happen very early in pregnancy (less than 12 weeks), there may not be remains available after the pathology exam is completed.
- If you have a medication-induced loss at home, your provider will talk with you about how to care for fetal remains at home or give you information about the need for a pathology exam and hospital disposition of your fetal remains.

Will I be charged for the handling of my pregnancy remains?

Charges for the pathology exam are usually billed to your insurance. It's a good idea to check with your insurance to be sure that they will cover this cost. If you don't have insurance, you will be billed for this cost.

There will be a cost to you if you choose to send your pregnancy remains to a mortuary. This cost will vary based on the mortuary that you choose.

If you elect to have the hospital perform a medical cremation, there will be no charge to you.

Use the table on the following page to help you decide whether you would like a pathology exam of the pregnancy remains, and how you would like to care for those remains after the exam.

Questions for my doctor

Options for caring for fetal remains				
	Pathology exam and parent-coordinated care	**Pathology exam and hospital-coordinated care**	**No pathology exam and parent- coordinated care**	**No pathology exam and hospital-coordinated care**
Pathology exam	The remains of your pregnancy will be sent to a pathologist who will examine the tissue and create a report confirming fetal tissue and identifying any problems found.	The remains of your pregnancy will be sent to a pathologist who will examine the tissue and create a report confirming fetal tissue and identifying any problems found.	Not performed	Not performed
What happens to the fetal remains	• You will need to complete a form that requests that the remains be sent to a mortuary of your choice. • You will need to contact the mortuary of your choice to make arrangements for them to receive the remains. • The remains will be given to the mortuary after the pathology exam is complete. • For mortuaries outside of Utah or for burials performed without a Funeral Services Director, you will need to get a Burial-Transit Permit from the Department of Health prior to collecting the remains. • Fetal remains may be picked up within 5 days.	• Hospital will coordinate care of remains.	• You will need to complete a form that requests that the remains be sent to a mortuary of your choice. • You will need to contact the mortuary of your choice to make arrangements for them to receive the remains. • The remains of the pregnancy will be given to the mortuary. • For mortuaries outside of Utah or for burials performed without a Funeral Services Director, you will need to obtain a Burial-Transit Permit from the Department of Health prior to collecting the remains. • Fetal remains may be picked up within 5 days.	• You will sign a form indicating that you would like a hospital cremation. • The hospital will dispose of the remains.
Cost	• The pathology exam will be billed to your insurance. • You will be required to pay the fees for the mortuary of your choice.	• The pathology exam will be billed to your insurance. • There is no cost to you if the hospital takes care of the remains.	• You will be required to pay the fees for the mortuary of your choice.	• There is no cost to you for hospital cremation.

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