



### You have time

Deciding what to do will possibly be one of the biggest decisions you will have to make during your lifetime. The most important thing to remember is you do not need to feel alone. There are many support groups who are willing to support you in whatever decision you make.

Please make sure that you make the best decision for you. You should not feel rushed into making these decisions. The most important thing to remember is you do not have to feel alone. Talking with your specialist and midwife are a good start. Your local Sands group will also be able to offer support. Parents often benefit with talking to others who have received the same diagnosis. Some Sands groups have members who have been through a similar experience and are happy to talk with you. Many parents find searching the Internet beneficial.



### Please remember

- Do not feel rushed or pressured into anything
- Ask lots of questions
- Find out all you can
- Make the decision that is right for you



# Sands

Sands New Zealand is a network of parent-run, non-profit groups supporting families who have experienced the death of a baby. We have over 25 groups around the country.

All of the people involved in Sands give their time and energy voluntarily - we are not a government funded organisation. We do not have any paid staff. Most of our members/supporters are also bereaved parents.

To find your local Sands group visit  
[www.sands.org.nz/supportgroups.html](http://www.sands.org.nz/supportgroups.html)

We also provide a closed bereaved parent chat page on facebook — [www.facebook.com/groups/SandsNewZealand.Bereaved.Parents/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/SandsNewZealand.Bereaved.Parents/)



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# Sands

## A Heartbreaking Choice

A guide for parents  
and their family

## Hearing the news

We are sorry you are reading this booklet and hope that it can offer a little support during this difficult time. To be told that your baby is sick, has a syndrome or a terminal condition is one of the hardest things a parent can hear. Hopes and dreams are shattered and emotions are raw. You will have heartbreaking decisions to make and it is important that you take your time. The choices you make now are the first steps on your journey of grief.

## Making a decision

Once you have heard the news, there are two choices – to continue with the pregnancy or to end it (often called interrupting the pregnancy). Over the following days you will be faced with many decisions which may be made based on religious beliefs, your view on quality of life, or personal circumstances.

At first you may feel shell shocked and want to wake from this terrible nightmare, but it will help immensely if you can find out as much information as possible. This will ensure that you make the right decision for you and your family. It is possible that you may need things to be repeated several times – don't worry, this is normal.

## Interrupting the pregnancy

Parents who choose to end a wanted pregnancy because of an abnormality, do so for love. Many miscarriages happen because there is something wrong with the baby. Sadly this is not always the case and it is left up to the parents to decide.

If you have made the decision to interrupt your pregnancy, it is important that you have enough information about the process and what your baby might look like. Support systems should be put in place to help you cope physically and emotionally. Again, start by talking with your specialist or midwife.

It can be helpful to create some memories before your baby dies which will help in your grieving process. Some ideas are

- Getting a scan picture
- Writing a letter to your baby
- Starting a journal and recording your thoughts and feelings
- Taking a photo of you pregnant

Some of these things may feel unnatural right now but many parents come to cherish these kinds of memories and are pleased they took the time to make them. They can be an important part of the grieving process.

## Continuing the pregnancy

To continue with a pregnancy after a poor prognosis will be a difficult time but can also be a rewarding experience. You are giving yourself and your unborn baby the biggest gift of all – time. This time can be spent bonding with your baby, creating memories that you can cherish once he/she has died, as well as preparing yourself for the birth. Support during this time is essential, whether this is through a partner, family member, health professional or a group such as Sands. You need to know you are not alone and that there are people who can help you through this journey.

During the time that your baby is alive, you may wish to listen into the heartbeat, have scan pictures taken, maybe have a video scan. Some mothers have a belly cast taken. You can plan trips to go on with your baby and take photos while you are there. A journal is something you will be able to look back on after your baby has been born. You can plan for your baby's funeral with the time that many parents do not have, making sure everything is how you would like it to be.

These ideas will not make this journey an easy one. They are given as an aid from other parents who have lived through a similar experience.