

What if we want to transport our baby by plane?

If it is necessary to transport your baby by plane, it is sometimes easier and less distressing if the arrangements are carried out by a funeral director. Domestically, Air New Zealand is the main airline that carries human remains. It requires the baby to travel in a casket or coffin in the hold of the plane and not in the cabin. This can be upsetting if you wish to be with your baby at all times. It is possible for you to negotiate the travel details of your deceased baby with Air New Zealand directly, but be aware that you will be dealing with the cargo division, which may be upsetting for you and your whānau/family. Jetstar does not transport human remains within New Zealand. Smaller airlines (such as Sounds Air and Air Chathams) have similar policies to Air New Zealand and should be contacted directly.

For international transportation of a deceased baby, you must have a funeral director involved because it is a requirement that all bodies are embalmed when being flown to another country.

What if we do not feel we can transport our baby ourselves?

If you cannot or do not wish to transport your baby yourself, a funeral director is the best person to speak with. They can organise transportation on your behalf. Some funeral directors do not charge for the care of a deceased baby or they charge very little, but you will need to ask about this when you first speak with them.

Do we have to take our baby home?

It is your choice whether you take your baby home or not. Some parents leave their baby with the hospital and arrangements are made for cremation or transportation to a funeral home from there. Others find that having their baby at home or at their marae with them provides them with additional time to farewell their baby. This pamphlet is designed to help ensure bereaved parents, families and whānau are aware of the different options and can make a decision that is right for them.

Remember that only you will know what feels right for you and your baby – you are his/her parents, family or whānau, and only you will know what feels right for you and your baby. Family, whānau and hospital staff can assist you in making decisions but the final choice is yours. This is part of parenting your baby, even when he or she has died, and a way of creating memories. Take your time. There is no need to rush. Go gently.

See the government website Whetūrangitia – <https://wheturangitia.services.govt.nz/> for more helpful information regarding transporting your baby.

This pamphlet is produced in memory of precious Tilo Spill, and his first ride in a car.

Te Whatu Ora
Health New Zealand

Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government



transporting your baby guidelines for parents, family and whānau

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☉ Sands New Zealand has developed these guidelines to support bereaved parents, families and whānau to make decisions about transport for their deceased baby. These guidelines apply to a baby of any gestation, but especially for those who are stillborn, who are born alive (at any gestation) or who die within the first 28 days of life. These guidelines do not apply to the transportation of a baby who has been referred to the coroner (the police will arrange the transportation of the baby to the coroner's mortuary) but do apply when the baby's body is released and may be taken home from the mortuary by the family.

☉ Legal Requirements

If your baby was born before the 20th week of pregnancy or weighs less than 400 grams, you are not legally required to bury your baby in a cemetery, urupā or to have your baby cremated, although you may choose to do so if you wish. You may bury your baby in a place of your choice (on private property). Alternatively, you may still choose to have your baby buried in a cemetery, urupā or to have your baby cremated.

If your baby was born alive (at any gestation), was born during or after the 20th week of pregnancy, or weighed 400 grams or more when born – then your baby must be buried or cremated in a registered place such as a cemetery, an urupā or a crematorium.

☉ Documentation

If your baby's death has not been referred to the coroner, there are no legal requirements for the transportation of your baby, except that it is important to have the relevant documentation (or forms) should you need to show them to anyone. The documentation you need for a stillborn baby or a baby who has died after birth is the 'Transfer of Charge of Body' form (BDM 39) and the Medical Certificate of Causes of Fetal and Neonatal Death (HP4721), both of which you will receive from the hospital or mortuary.

For an older baby (more than 28 days old), you will receive a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (HP4720) from the hospital. If the death was under coronial investigation, you will receive a coroner's order for Disposal of Body (Coroner 3) from the coroner.

It is best to keep the documents with the baby at all times, especially in case a car accident happens

on the way to your destination. That way, the police, paramedics and others will know that the baby was not alive when the accident happened. We recommend you tuck the forms alongside your baby in the car seat, basket or bassinette.

☉ Where can we take our baby?

You may wish to take your baby in your car from the hospital to your home, from the hospital to the funeral directors, from your home to the funeral and from the funeral to the crematorium, urupā or cemetery. You may also wish to transport your baby to your home town or to visit a place of special significance to you or your whānau/family. It is recommended that you consider the appropriateness of where you take your baby and other people's reactions to seeing a deceased baby.

☉ What can we transport our baby in?

Your baby can travel in the car with you. Your baby is able to be transported in a baby seat, Moses basket (some hospitals in New Zealand have these available), in a cocoon, in a bassinette or in a little casket or coffin. The important thing is to secure the baby during the trip. You may also decide to carry baby yourself in your arms (perhaps wrapped in a shawl or blanket); this is a choice you can make as it does not contravene any regulations. If you do choose to hold your baby, it is important to have the necessary documentation near the baby.

For smaller babies (from around 12-16 weeks), the hospital may provide a basket or some form of container for your baby to be taken home in. While it may not be necessary to secure the container with a seat belt, it is still important that you secure it in some way.