

**W**hen your baby dies, everything you do for and with your baby becomes a very special memory. Because there are so few moments to share during this difficult time, for many parents and families it is important to create tangible mementos of their child. Sometimes they create traditions to honor their baby, or they might make a special gift or craft as a gentle reminder. For so many bereaved families, finding meaningful ways to cherish the short life of their baby is significant to healthy healing.

***How can I begin creating memories?*** The moment you found out you were pregnant you created a lasting memory. There are many tangible items you can collect starting from the time you found out you were having a baby. Begin by gathering anything that reminds you of your pregnancy or baby.

***MEMENTOS BEFORE DELIVERY OR WITH AN EARLY PREGNANCY LOSS CAN INCLUDE:***

Pregnancy test results

Appointment cards from your doctor's office

Sonogram picture - if you had an ultrasound, but do not have a picture, call your doctor or lab and ask for a copy

Cards or flowers of congratulations or recognition of your pregnancy

Pictures of yourself pregnant, even if you didn't look or know you were pregnant

***MEMENTOS YOU CAN CREATE OR COLLECT IN THE HOSPITAL CAN CONSIST OF:***

Pictures of you, your family, or friends

Pictures of your baby

Crib card, comb, or measuring tape

Lock of hair

Hospital birth certificate or honorary certificate

Baby clothes and/ or blanket

Footprints and handprints - place them on paper or in a memory book

Permanent footprints and handprints - if your facility does not provide permanent prints, you can use soft clay or Model Magic

Cards, flowers, or gifts you receive after your loss

Stuffed animals

***What do I do with all these things I have saved?*** When a baby dies, you lose the memories that you would have created in your future together. For some parents, finding ways to create mementos is important to their grief process. The following ideas may help you decide how you might want to honor and cherish the memories that you can create for you and your baby. These ideas, perhaps, could help you find tangible connections to your special child.

***MAKE BIRTH AND/OR DEATH ANNOUNCEMENTS.*** This baby will impact your life as you never expected, and will find ways to touch others' lives as well. Making announcements validates your baby's short life and can include precious memories for those you share it with. You can include footprints, handprints, dates, times, weight or length, and/or a picture. Parents sometimes feel that including a brief message about their baby's short life and the need for continued support during this tragic time is a way of being open and reaching out to family and friends.

***MAKE COPIES OF YOUR ULTRASOUND PICTURES.*** Put them in a safe place (do not laminate them). A copy center can copy them onto acid free paper to help preserve them longer.

***CREATE AN ALBUM.*** You can make a simple picture album or scrap book your pictures and paper memories.

*CREATE A MEMORY BOX.* You can buy or decorate a memory box that can be any size or shape. Including your mementos in the box is a good way to have your baby's belongings close to you without displaying them.

*CREATE A SHADOW BOX.* A shadow box is a unique way of displaying any of those little items that sometimes get put away. Show your pictures, hand and foot prints, tape measure, clothes/socks, crib card, lock of hair, or any other item that you have collected or created.

*CREATE TANGIBLE MEMORIES FROM BLANKETS OR CLOTHING.* Many times clothes and blankets are put away in boxes, trunks, or closets for safekeeping. Stuffed animals, angels, or quilts are just a few of the items you can create using the fabrics you have saved.

*DRY YOUR FLOWERS.* You can create many special things using dried flowers. For example, you can create a potpourri to be displayed in a special bowl or vase. There are also plastic and/or glass ornaments available that can be filled with flowers and ribbons, and decorated with fabric flowers, extra ribbon, or tiny, plastic baby decorations. Making candles decorated with the flowers in the wax or placed neatly around it is another creative way to display your special flowers. You might also want to arrange or glue them in a shadow box around a special poem or picture.

*FIND OR MAKE A SHELF* that can be used to display items of your choice.

No matter how you choose to create memories of your baby, it is very healing to do so. Acknowledging your baby's life is the most special way you can honor your baby.