

Sensitive management of pregnancy tissue sent to the Royal Berkshire Hospital for further testing

This leaflet uses the term ‘pregnancy tissue’ to describe what was inside your uterus – we are sorry that we have to use this wording to allow this leaflet to be relevant to all those who experience a termination of pregnancy for medical reasons. Please let us know what language you would like us to use when discussing this with you.

We will explain what happens ONLY to the samples of pregnancy tissue sent to us for further testing. Your wishes for the rest of the pregnancy tissue will be honoured by the place who performed the termination.

What happens to the pregnancy tissue sent to us?

If you have requested genetic testing, then a sample will be sent by British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS) or the organisation who arranged your termination, to the Royal Berkshire Hospital’s Pathology Laboratory and onward to the genetic testing facilities to be examined.

Any remaining pregnancy tissue, if it is clearly identifiable, will go to the mortuary to be blessed in a non-religious blessing by the hospital chaplain, placed in a casket with others of a similar gestation, before being sensitively stored awaiting cremation, which happens once every three months.

Following cremation, the ashes will be scattered in the memorial garden. Unfortunately, as this is a shared cremation, no ashes can be recovered for you to keep after a cremation, but we can advise where the garden is and how you can visit whenever you wish.

Funeral Directors Tomalin and Son of Henley scatter ashes at the West Berkshire Crematorium, Bath Road, Thatcham RG19 4LD. They provide this service free of charge to the community.

Why might it be necessary for us to keep some pregnancy tissue?

Sometimes, it may be necessary to examine your samples at a later date to provide information about placental growth, which may be useful for your care.

Once tissue has been examined, the microscope slides and preserved blocks of tissue will be stored in the hospital archive as part of your hospital notes.

Can I take anything home with me?

You have the right at any stage, up until the pregnancy tissue has been cremated, to request the remains of your pregnancy to take home with you.

If you do so, you have a legal obligation to comply with certain rules and regulations about

burial on private land or disposal by any other means. We will ask you to sign a form to release any tissue from the hospital, confirming that you will manage of it lawfully.

You should understand that if tissue preserved as a block or slide has been returned to you; while efforts will be made to remove the preservative solution, it will still contain a substance potentially harmful to health (formaldehyde). This means that not only must it be disposed of safely but it may not deteriorate for many years. We should also emphasise that once released from the hospital, these slides will no longer be an accessible part of your patient record for future reference.

Further information

We hope this information has been useful. If you wish to discuss this further with a member of staff, please let us know.

A trained member of staff is available 8am-4pm, Monday to Friday, on 07768 752 563, if you have further questions or concerns.

HTA (Human Tissue Authority) – www.hta.gov.uk

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

A Wood, Lead Fetal Medicine Midwife, June 2023

Next review due: June 2025