

death. This may include seeing, touching, holding, caressing, and talking to their infant privately; the parents may also wish to bathe and dress the infant. If parents are hesitant about seeing their dead infant, it is advisable to keep the body in the unit for a few hours because many parents change their minds after the initial shock of the death.

Parents may need to see and hold the infant more than once—the first time to say “hello” and the last time to say “good-bye.” If parents wish to see the infant after the body has been taken to the morgue, the infant should be retrieved, wrapped in a blanket, rewarmed in a radiant warmer, and taken to the mother's room or other private place. The nurse should stay with the parents and provide them an opportunity for private time alone with their dead infant. Individual grief responses of the mother and father should be recognized and handled appropriately; gender differences and cultural and religious beliefs will affect the parents' grief responses.

A hospice approach for families with infants for whom the decision has been made to not prolong life and who are receiving only palliative care may be implemented in such cases. Another approach is to send the family home with the infant and allow them to spend time together until the eventual death; hospice services may be available, and supportive care is provided in the home setting. Some families find this option less restrictive and more family oriented than being in the hospital setting. See [Chapter 17](#) for further discussion of hospice care.

A photograph of the infant taken before or after death is highly desirable. Parents may wish to have a special family portrait taken with the infant and other family members; this often helps personalize and make the experience more tangible. The parents may not wish to see the photograph at the time of death, but the chance to refer to it later will help make their infant seem more real, which is a part of the normal grief process. A photograph of their infant being held by the hand or touched by an adult offers a more positive image than a morgue type of photograph. A bereavement or memory packet can be given to the grieving parents and family; it may include the infant's handprints and footprints; a lock of hair; the bedside name card; the ID bracelet or armbands; and, as appropriate to the family's religious beliefs, a certificate of baptism.

Naming the deceased infant is an important step in the grieving