

know all the answers that these are the questions we all struggle with.

Listening to their worries and questions, letting them know you are there for them, and that you don't have all the answers is the best way to support children and young people through loss and bereavement.

Visiting the Mortuary

Viewing the remains of the deceased: Many adults are fearful of visiting a hospital mortuary. This anxiety can understandably be passed onto children and young people. However seeing the deceased's remains can often help children and young people grasp the finality of death. Explaining that the body no longer 'works' after death is important to children. Letting them see that the heart is no longer beating and that blood is no longer circulating can help children and young people understand the concept of death. It is also very important that they can be part of your family who are grieving. Most of all it is important to allow each child and young person to decide for themselves if they want to visit the mortuary or not.

Support available in Beaumont hospital

This leaflet will give you some initial information about how to support children and young people following death in hospital. Please be assured of our ongoing support in the days and weeks ahead.

The staff in the mortuary at Beaumont will give you whatever immediate assistance you might require and refer you on to other services in the hospital. Telephone 852 8180

The Social Work department offer a range of bereavement support and referral services to families. Please contact the department for further information: Telephone 8093290 / 809 3953

The Irish Childhood bereavement Network has arrange of resources on their website that you may find useful when supporting children and young people who have been bereaved.

There website address is:
<https://www.childhoodbereavement.ie/>



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Beaumont Hospital

*Supporting children and young people
who have experienced the death
of someone close in hospital*



Information for Families

When you are grieving the death of someone close, it can seem overwhelming to know how you can support a child or young person who has also experienced that loss. Beaumont Hospital staff want to be as supportive as possible to you and your family at this difficult time. Please do feel free to speak to us about how we can provide support or information to you now or in the weeks and months ahead.

It is really important to remember that at this difficult time all you can do is your best. This leaflet will give you some short pieces of information that might be of some help in the initial stages of this difficult journey.

Children and young people express their feelings differently to adults. They can often appear as though everything is OK. Children need to know that they don't need to feel sad all the time. They often grieve in 'bits and pieces', and can often take the news of a death in a matter of fact way. The most important thing they need to know is that you will tell them the truth and include them in what is going on.



Talking about Death

As adults we can find it very difficult to talk to children and young people about death, particularly if they have not experienced the death of someone close in their life before. Our natural instinct is to protect them and sometimes we feel it is better not to tell them the truth. However children and young people are quick to pick up on things and can easily sense the distress around them. Our silence can be more distressing and bewildering for them

than knowing the truth. It is important that they are given age appropriate information so as they can talk about their loss, fears and upset too. They need to know that there are adults around who can listen to them and answer any questions they have about death honestly.



Breaking the News about Death

Children and young people's reaction to any traumatic event including a death will vary depending of their individual temperament and coping style. Reactions may range from preoccupation with all the details about the death to avoiding even discussing what has happened. Children simply have different ways of responding to death than adults. What is important is that you tell them the truth in a way you think they can best understand. Tell them the facts about what has happened, do not be afraid to use words such as 'died' 'heart stopped beating' or 'suicide'. You may have to explain these terms further but it is important that they hear what happened from someone they are close to.

Speak truthfully and openly about what has happened: Tell the child or young person what has happened, who has died and how they died in an age appropriate way. If you are open to talking about your feelings and showing your emotions they will follow. In this way feelings and emotions experienced following a death are normalised. Give details about how the death occurred 'Daddy died in his car' 'Mammy died because she took too many of her tablets' In this way they can begin

to understand what has happened. Too much information can be overwhelming but if we leave out too much they will fill the gaps from their imagination. More details can be given later

Do not make assumptions: Each child and young person is different and will react differently. Do not assume you know how they are thinking or feeling about what has happened. Do not be afraid to ask them. Just like you children and young people are trying to piece together what has happened and make sense of this big change in their lives.

Engage in open communication: It is important that you allow the child /young person talk about their concerns and ask any questions they might have. Equally they might not want to engage in any discussion or ask any questions. What is important is that you create an environment where children and young people feel supported and listened to, where they know you are there to talk whenever they need you.

Talk together about why this death has happened. Young children often do not understand that people of all ages die and that there are many different causes of death. Let them know that sometimes we never know the full circumstances of a death but that if and when you get more information you will tell them.

Be prepared for the same questions over and over again: Children and young people may ask the same questions over and over again. 'Why did Grandad die'? 'Can my sister still see me'? 'Did she mean to take all the tablets'? It is ok to tell them that we don't