

Information for women, families and whānau about deaths of newborn babies in New Zealand 2007–2016

Findings from the Committee

What women, families and whānau need to know

Babies born too early who have died

Approximately 70 babies die each year in New Zealand from being born prematurely from 20 to 24 weeks.

Being born early is the most common cause of death of babies.

Of the 729 babies who died from 2007 to 2016 due to being born too early (from 20 to 24 weeks), 119 babies were born to mothers who had already had a baby born early.

Mothers who have already had a baby born early are more likely to have another early baby in future pregnancies.

3 out of 10 babies born alive without a birth defect at 23 weeks were alive at 4 weeks of age.

7 out of 10 babies born alive without a birth defect at 24 weeks were alive at 4 weeks.

Some babies born at 23 and 24 weeks may have disabilities.

Babies born from 23 to 26 weeks were more likely to be resuscitated and to survive if the babies were born in hospitals with a neonatal intensive care unit.

Mothers who are younger than 20 years old and Māori mothers were more likely to have their babies in hospitals or birthing units without a neonatal intensive care unit.

New Zealand needs a premature birth prevention initiative to help women avoid a premature birth.

There is treatment that can start early in your pregnancy to help stop your baby being born early.

Please ask your midwife what you can do to stop your baby being born early.

Parents, families and whānau need enough information about their baby's chance of survival or disability to help them make decisions about their baby's care.

Babies born at 23 to 26 weeks have the best chance of survival if born in a hospital with a neonatal intensive care unit eg Auckland, Middlemore, Waikato, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin.

Please call your midwife, doctor or local hospital if you have signs and symptoms of early labour so you can receive care and transfer to a hospital with a neonatal intensive care unit if required.



Sudden unexpected death in infancy (SUDI)

68 babies of all babies born from 2007 to 2016 died from sudden unexpected death in infancy (SUDI) before they were 4 weeks old.

Babies should sleep in their own bassinet, wahakura or Pēpi Pod, on their back, with no pillow.

Please ask your midwife, doctor or nurse for a bassinet, wahakura or Pēpi Pod if you do not have one for your newborn baby.

