



## When Frozen Embryos Don't Survive Thaw

“One of the challenges of any adoption is navigating times of uncertainty. With embryo adoption, one of those times occurs when adopted embryos are thawed for transfer. It's possible that not all the embryos will survive the thaw.

Sacred Heart Guardians provides dignified, compassionate burial for embryos. We immediately knew that we would want to work with them, in the event that any of our embryos did not survive. We were impressed by their respect for life, and their loving care of each embryo.”

From a receiving (adopting) family

You can ask to have your deceased embryos buried, rather than disposed of as waste. Burial is an act of love which honors your embryos and gives them a lasting place in this world.

 **Before your frozen embryo transfer**, tell your clinic to send embryos that don't survive thaw to Sacred Heart Guardians and Shelter for burial.

- Burials take place quarterly at a Catholic cemetery (Minnesota). We gladly serve people of all faiths.
- After the burial, documentation is mailed to the patient or clinic, as authorized (see reverse).
- We serve the youngest human beings and their families. We charge nothing for this work.



Sacred Heart *Guardians & Shelter*

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[www.sacredheartguardians.org](http://www.sacredheartguardians.org)

## Instructions: Complete and give to your IVF clinic.

I/we authorize \_\_\_\_\_ (Clinic) and its ART lab to send any deceased embryo(s) resulting from my/our IVF or FET procedure(s) to Sacred Heart Guardians and Shelter (SHG) for burial.

Yes, Clinic may provide SHG with our contact information.\*

No, Clinic may not provide SHG with our contact information.

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*\*SHG uses this information only for the purpose of mailing burial-related documentation to the patient(s). Otherwise, patient(s) may retrieve this information from their clinic.*

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. Why burial?

An embryo (aka fertilized egg, pre-embryo, blastocyst, zygote, tissue, specimen) is a living human being in his or her earliest stage of development. If it dies (i.e., "arrests," "is non-viable," "is discarded"), burial is an appropriate and dignified way to handle its remains.

### 2. Which embryos can be buried?

SHG facilitates burial for all embryos, fresh or frozen, who die in ART (i.e., IVF) laboratories. Cause of death may include:

- Spontaneous arrest anytime after fertilization.
- Discard per grade or genetic testing.
- Failure to survive freeze or thaw.
- Cryopreservation equipment failure.
- Patient-elected thaw without transfer.

 **If you have frozen embryos you do not intend to transfer, please note that burial is *not* a "disposition option" (i.e., donate to research, donate to another person, thaw and discard). Rather, burial is a respectful way to handle the remains of the embryos after they have died, as an alternative to waste disposal.**

### 3. More about the burial....

Deceased embryos can be sent to SHG at any time, from IVF labs or patients located anywhere in the United States. SHG burials take place near St. Paul, MN in February, May, August, and November. All embryos buried on a particular date share a common burial container and no names are used. A grave marker is inscribed with the burial date and a short passage. Details of the burial, including gravesite ID number, are mailed to the clinic or patient, as indicated above.