








Burial for Deceased* Embryos

**also called: arrested, discarded, non-viable*

*They were so small that they could barely be seen.
And even though their lives were brief,
their memory will be forever in your heart.*

*Burying your deceased embryos is an act of love
that treats their remains with dignity and gives them
a permanent place in this world.*

 Tell your IVF center that you would like embryos that arrest (*i.e., die, are discarded*) in the lab to be buried by Sacred Heart Guardians and Shelter (SHG), rather than disposed of as waste.

-  IVF centers can send arrested embryos to SHG on your behalf, or we can work with you directly.
-  Communal burials take place quarterly at a Catholic cemetery in Minnesota (Mpls/St. Paul). We gladly serve people of all faiths.
-  Documentation of burial is mailed to the clinic, or patient when authorized (*see reverse*).
-  Our mission is to provide burial for the human beings who die in IVF labs. We charge nothing for this work.

"To know our embryos were shown the utmost respect - thank you. Thank you for acknowledging these lives. The depth of comfort it brings is enormous."



Sacred Heart Guardians and Shelter
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Instructions: Complete and give to your IVF center.

- YES. I/we authorize _____ (Center) and its ART lab to send any deceased embryos (Remains) to Sacred Heart Guardians and Shelter (SHG) for burial.
- Yes, Center may provide SHG with our contact information.*
- No, Center may not provide SHG with our contact information.
- NO. Do not send Remains to SHG for burial.

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 bury an embryo?

If fertilization of an egg by a sperm is successful, the result is an embryo (may also be known as a "fertilized egg," "pre-embryo," zygote, morula, blastocyst, "tissue," or specimen). An embryo is a complete, living, unique human organism - a *human being* - in his or her earliest stage of development. If an embryonic human being dies in the lab (*i.e., arrests, "is non-viable," is discarded*), burial is an appropriate and respectful way to handle its remains.

2. Which embryos can be buried?

SHG facilitates burial for any embryonic human being who dies in the ART (*i.e., IVF, embryology*) lab or long-term cryopreservation center. Causes of death can include:

- Spontaneous arrest in the incubator any time after fertilization.
- Discard per lab grade or genetic testing (e.g., PGD/PGS) result.
- Failure to survive freeze or thaw prior to an FET.
- Technical malfunction.
- Patient-elected thaw without transfer.*

***NOTE:** If you have frozen embryos you do not intend to transfer, burial is not a "disposition option" for so-called excess, unused, or leftover embryos. These frozen embryonic human beings may be able to continue living. Rather, burial is a final disposition for *deceased* embryos; a respectful way to handle their remains after death has occurred and an alternative to the routine practice of medical waste disposal.

3. More about burial....

Deceased embryos can be sent to SHG at any time from IVF labs, storage facilities, or patients in the U.S. SHG burials take place near St. Paul, MN four times a year. All arrested 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. Details of the burial, including gravesite ID, are mailed to the clinic or patient, as indicated above.