

CHU Sainte-Justine
3175 Côte-Sainte-Catherine Road
Montreal, QC H3T 1C5
Phone: (514) 345-4931

www.chu-sainte-justine.org



A Sudden and Unexpected Death of a Child

Information Intended for Parents

Contact us

514 345-4931 ext. 2581

One of our social workers will call you one week following your child's death. We will also contact you again two weeks after to check if you would be available to meet with us to go over any questions you may have about your child's death and to provide you with any available information about the investigation.

We wish to extend you and your loved-ones our deepest condolences for your loss. If we could be of any help to you in this difficult time, please know that you can call on us.

Emergency physician : _____

Nurse : _____

Social worker : _____

Produced by

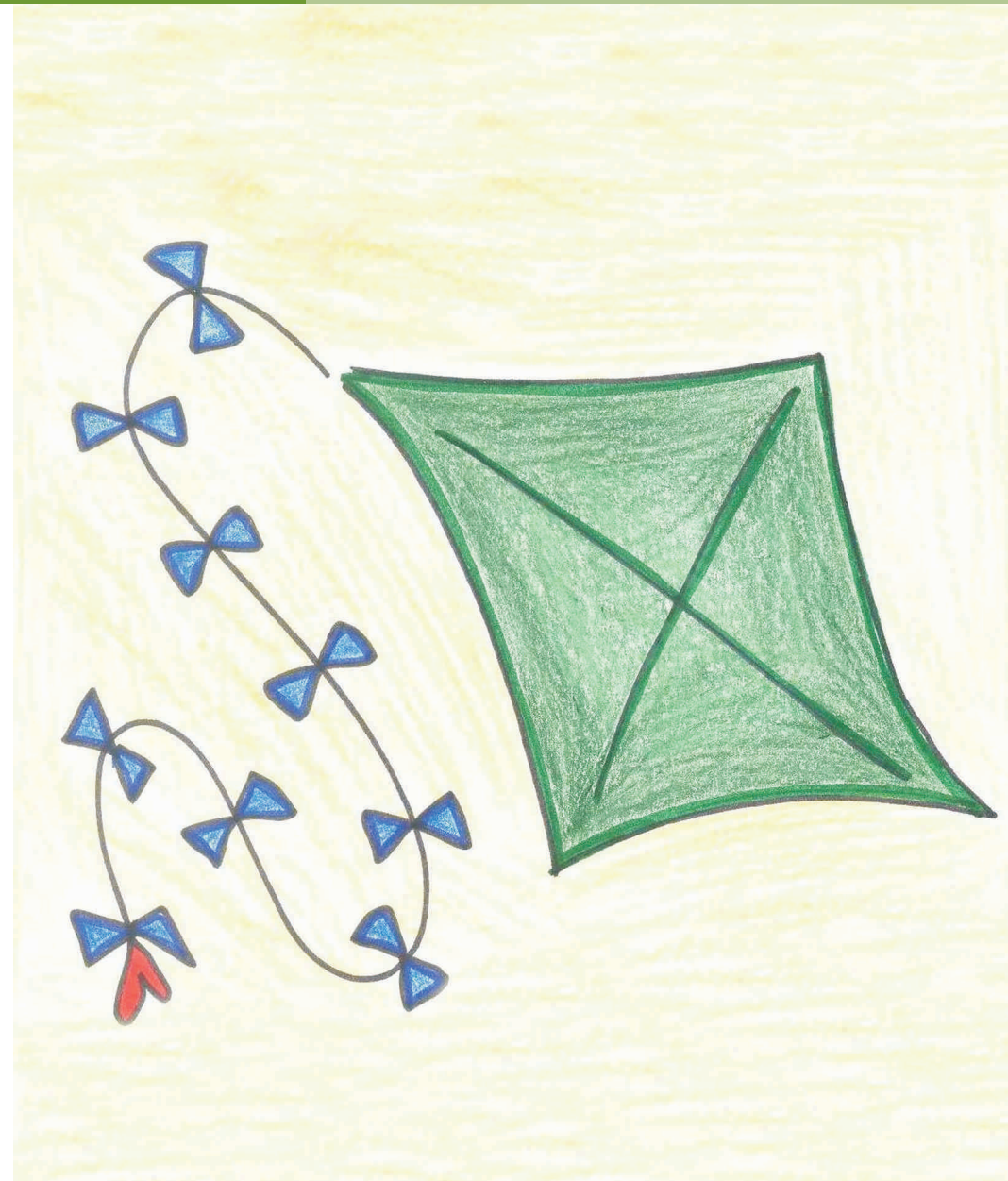
Catherine Hogue M.Sc., *Nurse (cand)*
Carine Sauvé M.Sc., *Nurse, CCSI*
Dr. Arielle Lévy
Dr. Nathalie Gaucher
Paul Morin, *Emergency TS*

Designed by

Norman Hogue, *Communications and Public Affairs*

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This document is intended for parents and families whose child has just suddenly and unexpectedly died. The following will explain the manner in which the cause and circumstances surrounding your child's death will be investigated in the coming weeks and months.

We understand that this is a very painful moment. There are no words that can describe your loss. Please know that you have our support. Take the time to read this document, and contact us if you have any questions.

What is a sudden and unexpected death?

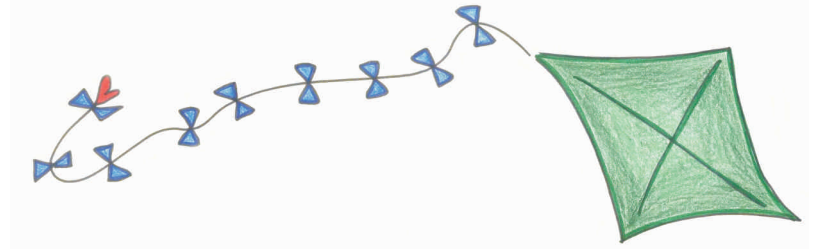
When a child or teenager who appears to be in good health has mild symptoms such as those of a small cold or fever without seeming to be very sick, or without suffering from a disease, and that the death appears to be unrelated to this disease, this is referred to as a sudden and unexpected death. (Coroner's Office, 2008)

Why an investigation?

As an impartial and independent officer, the coroner's role is to determine the cause and circumstances surrounding a child's death. When the cause of death is unclear, a coroner is assigned to the case to establish the facts. The coroner produces a report in which the investigation's outcome in terms of probable cause of death is published. Even though these investigations usually manage to establish a clear cause of death and the circumstances surrounding it, many deaths go unexplained despite a full investigation.

At the hospital...

When a child is found unconscious at home, the child is brought to emergency, where resuscitation procedures are conducted on the child by the emergency team. While in emergency, tests and examinations are done with the objective of helping the child. When a death occurs, the test results and examination reports are sent to the investigating team to help them establish the cause of death and circumstances.



Circumstances surrounding a death

Quebec law requires that an investigation always be conducted when there is a case of sudden death in order to establish its cause. The investigation is conducted jointly with the police and the coroner. They search the location where the death occurred, and discuss the circumstances surrounding the death.

Autopsy

In certain cases, the doctor may request that an autopsy be done in order to determine the cause of death. An autopsy is an internal and external examination of the deceased child. It is conducted with the utmost respect for the child and their family members. Autopsies do not impact any of the funeral arrangements made for the child. Tissue, blood and fluid samples are taken from the deceased child, and sent to be thoroughly tested.

How long does it take to obtain the results of the investigation?

Most often, parents receive the preliminary results in the days following the death. The final results are not made available only until several months later. They are sent to the parents by the coroner upon request. The doctor who administered resuscitation procedures on the child could also be granted authorization by the coroner to contact the parents for a followup meeting.

References

Coroner's Office

<http://www.msp.gouv.qc.ca/coroner/>
(418) 643-1845
1-866-312-7051

Federation of Funeral Cooperatives of Quebec

<http://www.fcfq.qc.ca/en/accueil.htm>
(819) 566-6303