



What Will Happen Immediately After The Death?

This booklet will help you in your next steps following a death.

What Will Happen Immediately After The Death?

It is impossible to predict how you will react to the death of someone you love, even when it is expected. You may go into shock or cry. You may carry on as though nothing has happened – or try to do so. You may go through many different feelings and emotions after a person has died, even in the first few minutes and hours. There is no right or wrong way to feel and react.

If you are alone at this time, you may want to ask family and friends, or a religious or spiritual adviser, to come and support you.

Contents

If The Person Dies At Home	3
What Is Verifying And Certifying The Death?	3
If You Need The GP's Support	4
What Next?	4
Can You Keep The Body At Home?	4
If The Patient Dies In A Care/Nursing Home, Hospice or Hospital	5
When Death Is Unexpected	5
Registering The Death.....	5
Address of Your Local Register Office:	6
The Registrar Will Want To Know The:	7
The Registrar Will Provide:.....	7
What If The Burial Has To Go Ahead Quickly?	7
The Death Certificate	7

The Funeral 8

 Wishes of The Person Who Has Died 8

 Burial 8

 Cremation 9

 Disposal Of The Ashes 10

 Selecting A Funeral Director: 10

 Who Pays For The Funeral? 11

Coping With Your Grief 12

 Everyone Grieves In Their Own Way 13

 Take Your Time To Make Choices 13

 Intense Feelings Are Part Of Grieving 13

 Grieving Within A Family 14

 Supporting Children Who Are Grieving 15



If The Person Dies At Home

If you and your family are alone at the death, you may find that when you call the GP they will ask what time the person died.

What Is Verifying And Certifying The Death?

While it may be clear that the person has died, at some point an appropriate healthcare professional will need to verify the death - they do this by making certain checks to be sure that the person has died. It is best not to move the body from the home before this has taken place.

In addition, a registered medical practitioner (usually a GP) will need to certify the death by completing a form called a medical certificate of cause of death if this was an expected death and if they are sure the death resulted from natural causes. They will also give you a formal notice that the medical certificate has been signed. This paperwork will allow you to register the death, obtain the death certificate and arrange the funeral. Often, people mistakenly call this the death certificate, but that is a different form issued by the Registrar later.

- Sometimes a GP will verify and certify the death at the same time.
- Sometimes another healthcare professional will verify the death in the person's home while a GP certifies the death later (for instance, at the person's home the next day or at a funeral director's premises).

The doctor who certifies an expected death should be the person's regular doctor who treated them during their illness and who visited them during the two weeks prior to their death.

If no GP meets these conditions, the GP of the person who has died will need to report the death to the Coroner. This is generally a formality, and may simply lead to discussions between the GP and Coroner. A death may be reported to the Coroner for other reasons – for instance, if the person died of an occupational disease or if the GP has any questions about the death. Try

not to worry if the death is reported. If you have concerns contact the Coroner's office to find out what will happen next.

If You Need The GP's Support

The GP will not visit the person's home if it has been agreed that another healthcare professional will formally verify the death. However, if you or your family needs support from the GP at this time, ask them if they will visit you, even if they are not your own GP (they may not always be able to do so).

What Next?

After the death has been formally verified, the next stage is choosing a funeral director to handle the funeral arrangements and you can contact them once you are ready. You do not have to rush.

The funeral director will generally come within an hour of being contacted. If this is too soon (for instance, you may want a little more time to sit with the body, or wait for family or friends to arrive, or simply to collect yourself), discuss with them what time you want them to come. Some people may find it distressing to see the person's body being moved or to see some of the steps that may need to be taken before moving the body. You may want to ask the funeral director what will be involved, as some people may prefer to leave the room.

Can You Keep The Body At Home?

Funeral directors tend to take the body away promptly these days, but in most cases they don't have to do so. If you are using a funeral director and want to keep the body at home for a few hours, discuss this with them and they will advise you.

If The Patient Dies In A Care/Nursing Home, Hospice or Hospital

Nursing/Care Homes, Hospices and Hospitals have their own local arrangements regarding verification and certification of death and will issue the medical certificate confirming cause of death. They will provide information about how to register the death.

An appropriate member of staff (for instance, bereavement or mortuary staff) should also be able to offer advice on contacting a funeral director.

When Death Is Unexpected

The Department of Health produces a booklet: Help is at hand: a resource for people bereaved by suicide and other sudden, traumatic death to assist people experiencing an unexpected bereavement. Visit www.dh.gov.uk and search for Help is at hand 2010.

Registering The Death

It is a legal requirement to register a death with the Registrar for Births, Deaths and Marriages:

- within five days in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Unless the Registrar agrees to extend this period or when the death has been referred to the Coroner (Procurator Fiscal in Scotland).

In England and Wales, the death must be registered in the district where the person died. If this is not convenient for the person registering the death, registration can be arranged through any register office in England and Wales. However, it may take a day or two longer to issue the Death Certificate and the Certificate for Burial or Cremation (often called the green form) which is required for a cremation to proceed. If you think this may

delay arrangements, do speak to your local Registrar before you arrange for registration through them, or speak to the funeral director.

The majority of deaths are registered by a relative and the Registrar will normally only allow someone else to do so if no relatives are available. However, the death can be registered by any of the following people (this list is not comprehensive but covers most situations):

- a relative
- someone unrelated but who was present at the time of death
- the occupier of, or an official at, the building where the death occurred - for example, a matron of a nursing home
- the person responsible for arranging the funeral

Before registering the death, you should discuss your intention to do so with anyone else who has the right and who is likely to want to do so, to make sure that your efforts are coordinated.

Address of Your Local Register Office:

Birmingham	Walsall	Wolverhampton
Birmingham Register Office	The Register Office Walsall Council	The Register Office
Holliday Wharf	Civic Centre	Civic Centre
Holliday Street	Hatherton Road	St Peters Square
Birmingham	Walsall	Wolverhampton
B1 1TJ	WS1 1TN	WV1 1RU
0121 675 1004	0300 555 2847	01902 551234
register.office@birmingham.gov.uk	walsallregisteroffice@walsall.gov.uk	

Some register offices operate an appointments system, and opening hours vary between offices, so it is advisable to phone and check before you visit.

You should take with you the following documents about the person who has died:

- the medical certificate of cause of death which was issued by the doctor (this is essential)
- National Health Service medical card (if available)
- birth certificate (if available)
- marriage or civil partnership certificate (if available and appropriate) as well as the date of birth of a surviving spouse or civil partner

The Registrar Will Want To Know The:

- date and place of death
- person's first names and last name at time of death as well as any names previously used and last usual address
- person's date and place of birth
- person's occupation and whether they were receiving a state pension or other state benefit

The Registrar Will Provide:

- A Certificate for Burial or Cremation (often called the green form) which generally needs to be given to the crematorium before cremation or to the landowner or land manager for a burial.
- A certificate for social security benefits for you to take or send to the local Jobcentre Plus or social security office, along with any pension, income support or other benefit books.

What If The Burial Has To Go Ahead Quickly?

Some burials are required to take place within 24 hours of the death – for instance, for religious or cultural reasons. Advice should always be obtained from a Registrar or local funeral director.

The Death Certificate

There is no charge to register the death. However, there is a charge if you want a copy of the death certificate.

Extra copies of the death certificate may be needed to administer the estate. Some companies holding assets such as bank accounts, insurance policies or shares will accept a photocopy of the death certificate if certified by a solicitor as a true copy but many insist on an official copy from the Registrar. If you want to deal with several assets simultaneously in order to speed up the administration of the estate, it can be helpful to purchase extra copies when you register the death. Ask the Registrar to guide you on the number of copies you will need.

The Funeral

Wishes of The Person Who Has Died

Did the person who has died state any wishes about their funeral, such as a preference for burial or cremation? They may have paid money for a burial plot or made and paid for their own funeral arrangements.

If not, it is the executor named in the will, or the person who takes responsibility for arranging and paying for the funeral, who makes decisions about the funeral. They must also decide if any wishes the person expressed verbally or in writing are practical, affordable and acceptable.

Burial

Check the person's papers to see if you can find a document (possibly called a 'deed of grant') or receipt indicating that they arranged for a burial space in a churchyard, cemetery or other place, such as a nature reserve. The funeral director will need a copy of any such documentation.

The cost of using a burial place may vary depending on whether the person lived in that area at the time of their death – if they did not, it may cost considerably more.

Most churchyards are no longer open for burial because there is no more space.

Most cemeteries are non-denominational, so you will be able to hold most types of service in their grounds. Parts of some cemeteries have been legally consecrated by the Church of England. Check with the staff beforehand if this is important to you.

Alternative burial sites include woodland burial sites, nature reserves, meadow burial sites and woodland sections of public cemeteries – these are often referred to as natural burial grounds. Whether and how the burial space is marked can vary greatly, so do check beforehand about what is offered or allowed, especially if you want to be able to identify the burial space in future. If the burial space is on private land (such as private woodland or farmland), you may want to ask about the long term security of the land. It is also possible to bury the person on their own land. There are some restrictions and requirements, but not as many as people might expect.

In England and Wales a Certificate for Burial or Cremation (or Order for Burial from the Coroner's office) includes a tear-off slip that must be returned to the Registrar soon after the burial. Your funeral director will deal with this.

Cremation

Certain forms need to be completed before cremation goes ahead. The names of the forms differ across the four countries of the UK, but the procedure is broadly similar.

A close relative of the person or an executor needs to complete an application form for cremation. The funeral director can give you one.

In addition, two doctors will need to complete cremation forms – there is a charge for this. Your funeral director will contact the doctors. In both cases the first doctor should contact the second doctor. The procedure will differ if a Coroner or Procurator Fiscal is involved – if this is the case, they will tell you what to do. Your funeral director will ensure that all the forms are sent to the crematorium in time.

The crematorium staff will then arrange to review the relevant forms and authorise the cremation. If you choose cremation there are some restrictions on what you put in the coffin because of regulations about emissions – for instance, clothing made of artificial fibres, rubber-soled shoes and items such as soft toys may be discouraged. A funeral director or crematorium staff can advise you on this.

Disposal Of The Ashes

The person may have specified where they wanted their ashes to be scattered or buried. If they did not express any wishes, or if their wishes were not practicable, you have a number of choices.

You can scatter the ashes in the garden of remembrance at the crematorium, or in a place which was special to the person or which has meaning for you, such as your garden or a place you visited together. In the UK you can generally scatter ashes anywhere, but if you plan to do so on private land you will need permission from the landowner.

Alternatively, you can arrange for the ashes to be interred (buried) in a churchyard or family plot in a cemetery, or kept in a mausoleum. Some people keep the ashes at home in a casket or urn.

If you wish to scatter the ashes abroad, please note that some countries do not allow this while others have regulations about importing or scattering ashes. In addition, if you are planning to transport the ashes by plane, do check the specific airline's regulations beforehand.

Selecting A Funeral Director:

- You may wish to choose a firm that has been recommended by family or friends or one that you know locally.
- You may wish to consider a number of firms so you can compare services and prices.

- You could ask a local minister or religious leader for recommendations.

Who Pays For The Funeral?

The funeral costs are usually paid out of the estate (which includes money, shares, property and possessions). The funeral costs must be paid before all other debts and bequests are paid by the estate. If there is not enough money in the estate to cover the costs, the person organising the funeral will be obliged to meet the additional costs.

Some funerals are pre-paid – this is increasingly common. However, some pre-paid funeral plans only cover a basic funeral. Check with the funeral director to see what is included. If you choose extra services or items that were not included in the original plan or prepayment, the extra costs will have to be paid for in the same way as above.

Some funeral directors may ask for a deposit when you make the arrangements. This may be anything up to a few hundred pounds.

The funeral director's bill is usually sent fairly soon after the funeral. In general, you cannot access funds from a person's estate until it is granted, which can take some months. However, the major banks and building societies are generally prepared to release funds from the person's accounts to pay the funeral director's bill.

It may be possible to obtain a Social Fund Funeral Payment towards the cost of the funeral if you or your partner receive a benefit issued by social security such as income support, family credit, housing benefit or council tax rebates and if it is considered reasonable for you to accept responsibility for the funeral costs.

Broadly speaking, the authorities will not make a funeral payment to you if there is someone with one of the following relationships to the person who died:

- a partner
- a parent or adult child who does not receive benefits
- someone who was in closer contact than you
- someone who is not receiving benefits and who was as close as you

If a funeral payment is made, the authorities will reclaim payment from the person's estate if there are sufficient funds.

The relevant forms and guidance on eligibility are available from your local social security office. For England, Wales and Scotland you can also contact a Jobcentre Plus office.

Please note that the maximum payment available is not generally sufficient to cover the cost of even a basic funeral. Tell your funeral director at the very start before you commit to any arrangements if a Social Fund Funeral Payment will be the only money available. They will advise you accordingly.

If you are not eligible for help from the Social Fund and there are insufficient funds to pay for a funeral, or if nobody is able or willing to arrange and pay for the funeral, the local council (or in some cases the health authority) has a legal duty to arrange for burial or cremation. This is usually arranged through the local council environmental services department but in Scotland it may be the social work department.

Coping With Your Grief

Grieving is a natural process that can take place after any kind of loss, especially the loss of someone to whom you were very close. Dealing with intense feelings of loss can be very distressing but it is normal – albeit very difficult and painful – to experience very strong reactions. Grief is not an illness. Your feelings are something you experience and not symptoms that have to be treated.

Look after yourself physically. Try to eat well and get plenty of rest. It is very easy to overlook your physical needs when you are busy dealing with everything that has to be done after a death or struggling with grief.

Everyone Grieves In Their Own Way

Everyone reacts in their own way when they are grieving for someone who was very close to them. Each person and relationship is special and unique. Don't worry if you're not reacting the way other people seem to be, or if someone says you should be feeling or behaving a certain way and you're not. The important thing is to allow yourself to feel and do what is right for you in your own time.

Take Your Time To Make Choices

Your first reaction may include disbelief and confusion. You may find it impossible to take in what has happened. Even if you were expecting a person to die, the moment of death may have come as a shock, leaving you feeling unprepared and anxious or even angry.

There will be some practical things to attend to and decisions to make. Some things do have to be done quickly, but don't feel you have to rush into decisions if there is no need. Think about what you really want and take your time. You may find it helpful to talk to someone about practical issues. Don't enter into any financial or legal agreements unless you fully understand them and don't let others rush you into anything before you are ready.

Intense Feelings Are Part Of Grieving

People often find that the first two or three months after someone has died are quite busy with practical things to attend to. It can be after this period that the full impact of your loss may be felt. You may be surprised by the intensity of your feelings. You may become forgetful and find it hard to concentrate.

You may experience a whole range of feelings including physical pain and great sadness, isolation, helplessness, anxiety, relief and anger that the person has died.

You may be angry at yourself because you wish you had done things differently and now feel you have no opportunity to put things right and be forgiven. You may be angry at the person for dying. You may be angry at the world for your loss, or feel anger towards your god.

It is not uncommon to feel relief that the person has died and then feel guilty about feeling this way. There may be many different reasons why you would have such feelings – situations and relationships can be very complicated – but try not to feel guilty because they are also part of grieving.

You may also find that feelings return about a previous loss which you thought you were over, or that you now grieve for a previous loss that didn't seem to affect you at the time. Don't feel you have to hide your feelings if you don't want to. Talk about how you feel as much as you need to. You may find you need to talk through your feelings repeatedly.

Don't ignore your grief or try to move on before you feel ready. There is no right or wrong amount of time to grieve. Recovery is not a constant process – sometimes you will feel worse rather than better, but this is normal. You may also find that birthdays, holidays and anniversaries are difficult times, even when you thought you had moved on.

You may find it helpful to make some longer term plans so that you have something to look forward to in the future.

Grieving Within A Family

Your family and friends will also be experiencing grief which will be unique to them. It can be upsetting if one family member feels very angry while another feels intense sadness and needs to cry, or if one person needs to talk about their feelings while another wants to say very little. Try to

acknowledge these differences. Sharing your thoughts and feelings can lessen the loneliness and bring you closer together.

Supporting Children Who Are Grieving

Generally, children under four or five years old do not understand that a person who has died will not come back. Children and young people often need to be reminded of this again and again.

Children experience the passage of time differently from adults and can therefore appear to overcome grief quite quickly. However, children in their early school years may need reassuring that they are not responsible for the death of a close friend or relative as they often blame themselves for one reason or another. This is something that anyone who is bereaved may experience, but it is particularly common for this age group.

If you are caring for grieving children, it is important to share your grief. Even very young children experience grief and need to be given the opportunity to express their feelings. You may want to protect your child from the pain of grief but, as one mother said: "It isn't a choice of whether she will hurt or not, but whether I will know about it".

Children often know more than adults realise and they need honest information to help them make sense of what has happened. If you are unsure about how to support your child then it may be helpful to talk to your GP, health visitor, practice nurse, social worker, support group or someone else with experience in such matters.

This booklet was
provided by:



**"An Independent Funeral Directors Caring For
You And Your Loved Ones, Now And Forever"**

10 Chester Rd, Sutton Coldfield, B73 5DA
0121 321 3446 www.liliesfunerals.com