

## Decisions and activities just after death

After a death, there are more decisions and activities than most families really expect. Take some time to remember the person who just died, to be in touch with loved ones, to pray, or to do whatever is significant and helpful to you.

- Within a few hours, usually, someone will move the body to a location that handles the dead bodies, such as a hospital morgue, a funeral home, or a government medical examiner's morgue. If a person expects to die at home, make plans ahead of time with a funeral director.
- What will be entered as the cause of death? Usually the doctor decides this, but if the cause is multi-factorial or embarrassing, family members could talk with the doctor and negotiate a resolution. It also may be necessary to make a decision about having an [autopsy](#).
- How many death certificates will be needed? Even for small and uncomplicated estates, people often find they need two dozen. Funeral directors can help, but families should get many more than they think they need, as it is often more costly and troublesome to get them later.
- Is organ donation appropriate and desired? Organ donation (heart, kidney, lung, liver, and so on) can be arranged in advance or at the time of death. Tissue donation (bone, cornea, and so on) can often be arranged even hours after death. Donations are essential to the well-being of others and can fulfill a dying person's wishes.
- Who needs to be notified, and how? Will some need travel tickets? Bear in mind that airlines and some other travel services give discounts to people who are traveling for such emergencies, but you will usually need a letter from a doctor or an official death notice. Consider asking the professional caregivers to help with giving notice to a few family and friends. Think about setting up plans so that those notified in turn can call others.
- Are there dependents who need immediate attention? Children and disabled or elderly dependents may be left adrift for daily care if a caregiving relative dies suddenly. Caregivers and more distant family need to consider this possibility, especially with the elderly person left at home who may not be otherwise known to health care personnel or even to neighbors.
- Are there property matters needing immediate attention? Sometimes there is real urgency to getting rent or taxes paid, house or car made secure, animals given care, and so on.

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