

## Dealing with Death

Nothing adequately prepares us for the initial shock of losing a loved one. Feelings of panic and helplessness may be overwhelming, but it's important to know you're not alone. Notifying family and friends is always an important consideration in the initial tasks to be completed. First, call immediate family members: parents, children, brothers, sisters and grandparents of the deceased.

Do not worry about waking others. Grief researchers say those close to the deceased feel left out if they aren't told about a death immediately. Rely on others to assist you in notifying everyone: do not attempt to do this yourself. It not only helps others through the grieving process to have some responsibility, but also allows you to handle other tasks.

Although it may be difficult, telling others of a death is therapeutic. By saying aloud that a loved one has died, the death is confirmed in your mind, which is an important step in the grief process.

The emotional impact of death makes it understandably difficult to focus on the details that go into organizing a funeral. We're here to help in any way we can. And our Resource Center offers you a wealth of information and guidance to assist you through the process.

### Question #1 **When death occurs at home, what should we do?**

Answer: If the death has been expected, the Hospice Group who has been caring for the deceased should be contacted so they can officially pronounce the death. You can then call the funeral home of your choice to remove the body and follow the personal wishes of the deceased.

If the death is unexpected, the police should be notified. They will dispatch an officer and contact a local coroner or medical examiner, who will decide the level of investigation necessary to determine the cause of death. They will arrange to have the body transferred to the either a hospital or examination center if an autopsy is required (at their cost).

You may suggest to the coroner or medical examiner which funeral home you would like to make this transfer.

If after a preliminary examination and investigation, it is determined no further inquiry is necessary, you may call the funeral home of your choice to remove the body and carry out the deceased's final wishes.

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**Question #2 When death occurs on vacation, what should we do?**

Answer: If a death occurs away from the home (during a vacation or a business trip) here are some things you should know.

Contact your local police department and they will dispatch an officer to your location immediately so you will not be alone. If the death was sudden and unexplained, the local police authorities will make the necessary call to the local coroner. A county medical examiner may also be called.

If you then call Walton's, we can act as your agent, monitoring the process so you can avoid the possibility of excessive, unnecessary or double-billing possibilities. Under your direction, we will handle the removal of the body and its transport to your preferred location.

If the police and/or coroners call a funeral home of their choice, your options will be limited.

**Question #3 When death occurs in a hospital, what should we do?**

Answer: Whether or not you're present when the death occurs, a health care professional will contact you and ask a few questions., possibly including:

Which funeral service provider will you be releasing the body to, for transfer from the hospital?

Would you like an autopsy performed?

Unless the deceased has died unexpectedly, you will have the choice. An autopsy is the thorough examination of the deceased body, to understand and determine the cause of death or any factors that may have contributed towards the cause of death. The information resulting from an autopsy can help researchers in developing cures and medications to assist in the preventions of such diseases. Autopsies are generally performed quickly, so as to not interfere with the funeral process. However you may experience some short delays and should check with the health care professional as to when you can expect the autopsy to be completed, if a delay could be of concern to you.

**Question #4 When death occurs in a nursing home, what should we do?**

Answer: If you have not called your funeral director, you will have to consider doing so as the body will have to be removed by them or an authorized agent.