

to be placed in the coffin; the crematorium will offer guidance if you have any concerns.

If he was usually clean-shaven, a man will need to be shaved, while women may have a little make-up applied as appropriate.

If the body is to be viewed by family and friends, you may also wish to style the hair.

## Where to find further information

Other leaflets are available on a range of topics from Registration/Bereavement Services.

In particular, you might also find the following leaflets useful:

- Registering a Death
- Buying a Grave
- Green Funerals
- Embalming
- Civil Funerals
- Arranging a Secular Service
- Environmentally Friendly Coffins
- Choosing a Memorial

For further information on other leaflets available, or if you require any additional information, please contact us:

Bereavement Services  
Nightingale House  
Balaclava Street  
Stockton-on-Tees  
TS18 2AL

Bereavement Services: (01642) 527341/42

Email:

[bereavement.services@stockton.gov.uk](mailto:bereavement.services@stockton.gov.uk)

[www.stockton.gov.uk/bereavementservices](http://www.stockton.gov.uk/bereavementservices)

If you would like this information in any other format or languages please contact 'Bereavement Services' on (01642) 527341/42

إذا كنت ترغب الحصول على هذه المعلومات بلغات أو بأشكال أخرى على سبيل المثال بالطبعة الكبيرة أو بالشرائط المسجل فالرجاء الإتصال 'بدايفرستي تيمز' (Bereavement Services) على هاتف رقم 01642 527341/42 ARABIC

欲要這份資訊的其它語言版或其它版式例如大字體印刷/錄音帶，請致電 01642 527341/42 接洽 '多元化隊' (Bereavement Services) MANDARIN

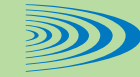
اگر شما این اطلاعات را به زبان یا شکل دیگری مثل چاپ بزرگ یا بصورت صدا میخواهید لطفاً با تیم نایورسیتی (Bereavement Services) با شماره 01642 527341/42 به تماس شوید Farsi

Si vous souhaitez obtenir ces informations dans d'autres langues ou sous un autre format, par exemple, en gros caractères / version audio, veuillez contacter l'équipe "Bereavement Services" au n° 016 42 52 73 41/42 FRENCH

ئەگەر تۆزەت لىن يە نەم زاسارى بە دەستت بەگەوتت بە زمانە كاسى نى ريان بە شىووە بە كى تر نۆ نمونە چاپى گەورە/بان بە تىبى تۆماركراو تىكابه بە يوه ندى بەگە بە تىمى دايفرستى (Bereavement Services) لە سەر ژمارەى تەلەفۆن 01642 527341/42 KURDISH

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਬਣਤਰ ਜਾਂ ਢੰਗ ਵਿੱਚ, ਵੱਡੀ ਛਪਾਈ ਵਿੱਚ ਜਾਂ ਟੇਪ/ਸੀ ਡੀ 'ਤੇ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ 'Bereavement Services' ਨੂੰ 01642 527341/42 ਨੰਬਰ ਉੱਤੇ ਫ਼ੋਨ ਕਰੋ। PUNJABI

اگر آپ ان معلومات کو کسی بھی اور زبان یا انداز، مثلاً بڑے پرنٹ/آڈیو ٹیپ وغیرہ میں حاصل کرنا چاہتے ہیں، تو 'ڈايفرستي تيمز' (Bereavement Services) کو اس نمبر پر فون کیجئے 01642 527341/42 URDU



Stockton-on-Tees  
BOROUGH COUNCIL



# Laying out and caring for the deceased

Information on caring for the body of the deceased at home



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## *Laying out and caring for the body*

When funerals are arranged without a funeral director, the laying out and care of the deceased must be considered.

If the death occurred in hospital, the deceased will be laid out by medical staff and moved to the mortuary. The body could remain there until the funeral, or could be collected and retained at home if preferred.

If the death occurs at home, the family doctor or a community nurse caring for the deceased during their final illness may be able to offer advice on laying out the body. They may even be able to complete this for you, perhaps upon the payment of a small fee.

Caring for the deceased is matter of personal choice and some may have reservations in caring for the deceased themselves. We often hear concerns, however, that male funeral directors have laid out female relatives and that family members are often excluded from the room during the process.

It is generally forgotten in these modern times that the laying out of bodies was traditionally a duty of female family members and friends.

## *Basic principles*

Rigor Mortis is a term used to describe the stiffening of the body that occurs shortly after death. The average onset of this is about six hours after the death and stiffness continues for around 24 hours.

The first step is to sponge

down the body and if the deceased wore dentures, these should be replaced if they had been removed prior to death. The use of a plastic sheet will help to protect the mattress.

Rigor Mortis affects the face first, so it is important to close the eyelids and jaw in the first three hours. A little petroleum jelly smeared along the eyelid should ensure that eyes remain closed. Traditionally, coins were placed over the eyes; you may wish to try this out of preference.

The head should be raised up on a pillow to allow blood to drain and improve the appearance of the face; this may be sufficient to hold up the jaw and close the mouth fully, but if not, a rolled up towel or toilet roll could be placed under the chin. This can usually be removed after a few hours.

It is a good idea to place the hands on top of the body to allow the blood to drain. As with the face, this will improve their appearance.

An old method was to bind the ankles to keep the legs in position. This can also help when the deceased is lifted into the coffin.

If urine is contained within the bladder, applying pressure in the area just above the pubic bone will drain it. Bowels are inclined to seep and incontinence pads can be used, and replaced as necessary. Pads and liners are available from most chemists and some of the larger supermarkets.

Fluid may also seep out through the skin, especially from larger people, which may

need to be mopped up or the clothing or sheet next to the skin may need to be changed.

Draping the body in a sheet allows for easy access for washing and other care.

## *Delaying decomposition*

In warm weather, deterioration can accelerate. The room should be kept as cool as possible and ice packs or bags of ice can be used to assist. They should be wrapped in a tea towel or other suitable material, as they will burn the skin if directly in contact. It is most important to keep the body, rather than the head and limbs cool; ice packs should also be replaced as they thaw. Daily washing or the use of aromatherapy oils may also help preservation and in many cultures, the body is washed in salt water. About five drops of essential oil in 10ml of carrier oil, such as grapeseed, sweet almond or even olive oils is recommended. Essential oils can be chosen according to preference, although using bergamot or citrus oils can be uplifting and helpful for the person caring for the deceased.

## *Dressing for the funeral*

It is your choice how to dress the deceased prior to the funeral. The body can be undressed, fully dressed or perhaps covered by a simple sheet or shroud.

If cremation is chosen, synthetic materials should be avoided wherever possible to reduce smoke and pollution. This should also be considered if jewellery and other items are

