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About this eBook

This eBook is a comprehensive guide to the practical aspects of what needs to be done when someone dies.

It contains helpful information and advice for individuals, families and all those involved in making important decisions with regard to different circumstances in which a loved one dies.

This information, which will make this task less confusing and more manageable, is set out in three basic stages:

1. What has to be done immediately.
2. What has to be done to prepare the funeral and farewell service.
3. What has to be done to finalise the estate of the deceased.

This information is gathered from extensive research by the author on this subject, from the author's personal experience when loved ones have died, from supporting the bereaved from the time their loved ones died to finalising the deceased's estate, and from interactions with various organisations in the field of death, loss, grief and bereavement.

Included are comments and opinions based on the author's many years of involvement in the field of grief and bereavement support.

Some deaths, such as those following a long illness, are anticipated by relatives whereas other deaths, such as those caused by accidents, come out of the blue. The sudden death of a loved one brings about a range of different or opposite reactions. One person may be able to stay cool and level headed and deal methodically with the situation, while another may become hysterical, overwhelmed and helpless. One person may appear calm and collected at the time but this may change to anger or depression in the days that follow. However, the most typical reactions are shock, confusion and vulnerability. It is in this unsettled emotional state that many crucial decisions have to be made and carried out.

Various circumstances, such as the cause of death or where it occurred may dictate specific action, but in most cases the following has to be done.

What needs to be done immediately after the death

The following needs to be done immediately to support the bereaved, to meet with health regulations and in the case of suspicious or accidental death to meet with the law.

Death by natural causes



IMPORTANT GUIDELINES

What to do practically when someone dies by natural causes

What needs to be done	Reason and important information
When the person dies or is found to be dead	
Inform family members and close friends.	The immediate family should be contacted as soon as possible so that they can come together to support each other.
If possible, allow each person, who so desires, to spend some personal time with the deceased.	This is important so that they can say goodbye, make peace or just spend a little quiet time with the deceased.
If the family has religious connections	
Urgently Inform the priest, pastor, rabbi or other religious leader.	This is important so that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the deceased can receive the final rites • the family members can receive pastoral support • preparations can begin for the farewell service.



What needs to be done	Reason and important information
<p>Inform everyone who may have an immediate interest in being notified, including the deceased's employer and co-workers or the school principal.</p>	

If the deceased had signed an organ donation form or stated this wish in a living will or if that decision can be made by an authorised person

<p>Notify the hospital, nursing home or hostel promptly.</p>	<p>Find out what needs to be done as not all hospitals, nursing homes or hostels have the same policies in this regard.</p>
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If the deceased wished to donate his/her body or body tissue to medical science

<p>Contact the Human Tissue Authority (HTA) immediately.</p>	<p>The HTA will be able to give instructions regarding the procedures to follow.</p>
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If the death occurred in a hospital, nursing home or hostel and the cause of death can be established by a doctor

<p>The doctor should be able to issue a medical certificate showing the cause of death.</p>	<p>This certificate will be addressed to the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages with information on how to register the death.</p>
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If the deceased is going to be cremated

<p>If the deceased is to be cremated, two doctors have to examine the body and sign the necessary cremation forms before the cremation can take place.</p>	<p>Expect a fee for this service.</p>
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If the death occurred at home

<p>Make a note of the time that the deceased died or was last seen alive, or when the person was found to be dead.</p>	<p>This is important especially if a post mortem examination has to be conducted by the Coroner.</p>
<p>Contact the deceased's doctor to officially pronounce the person dead.</p>	<p>If the deceased had been treated recently by that doctor, and the doctor is able to make a positive determination of the cause of death, the doctor should be able to issue a medical certificate to certify the death.</p>