

Death in hospital

A death in hospital may or may not have been expected. Whether the person has died from a chronic (ongoing) illness or a sudden event, hospital staff are sympathetic and are available to answer any questions or explain anything you don't understand.

You should feel free to stay at the hospital for as long as you wish and talk to the staff. Let the hospital staff know when you are ready to leave. The hospital will care for the deceased person until plans have been made with your chosen funeral director. The doctor will advise you if the death requires the attention of the coroner.

The role of the Coroner

- The State Coroner investigates a death if the death appears to have been unexpected, unnatural or violent or to have resulted, directly or indirectly, from an accident or injury or the death occurred during a medical procedure. An autopsy may be needed to find out why the person died. The Coroner requires that the person's body to be left exactly as they were at the time of death. The Coroner's Office arranges for the deceased person to be taken to the Coronial Services Centre. You can request that no autopsy be conducted. This request should be directed straight to the Coroner's Office. Further information on the coronial process can be found at www.coronerscourt.vic.gov.au

When you get home

When you get home, you may want to contact family, friends and your local clergy. It is good to seek company and support at this time. Hospital staff members can contact people for you if you wish. The hospital also has social workers and pastoral care staff who can help you. Ask the hospital staff how to contact them.

The funeral

You may need to check if a prepaid funeral has been organised or if there were special requests in regards to the funeral. If there are no existing plans, you will need to contact the funeral director of your choice. A list of funeral directors can be found under 'F' in the *Yellow Pages*.

Organising a funeral is an important part of grieving, so it is worth spending time to plan the funeral that you and the deceased person would want. If you need help, the funeral director can take care of all aspects of the funeral, such as ordering flowers, putting notices in the newspaper and handling the legal paperwork for either burial or cremation.

Grieving

No one can tell you how to grieve. Grief is personal and private. It's a journey you take and no two people will grieve the same way. It is important to give yourself and your family and friends enough time to grieve.

There is no 'normal' length of time for grieving. You may feel a wide range of emotions. These may include shock, sadness, numbness, anger, guilt, fear, anxiety, relief and a profound sense of aloneness.

The feeling of loss doesn't go away but the intensity will ease. Live one day at a time. It may help to ask for support from family and friends. Ensure that you take care of your diet and get enough rest.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Hospital staff, including social workers
- Coroners Court of Victoria Tel. 1300 309 519
- Community Health Service
- Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement, Bereavement Information and Referral Service 1300 664
- Grief Line (12 noon to midnight) Tel. (03) 9935 7400
- Life Line (24 hours) Tel. 13 11 14
- Suicide Help Line Victoria (24 hours) Tel. 1300 651 251
- Kids Helpline Tel. 1800 551 800
- Mensline Australia Tel. 1300 789 978
- The Compassionate Friends (self-help group for bereaved parents) Tel. (03) 9888 4944
- Parentline (8am to midnight weekdays, 10am to 10pm weekends) Tel. 132 289
- Road Trauma Support Team Tel. 1300 367 797
- SANDS Victoria (Stillborn and newborn death support) Tel. (03) 9899 0218
- SIDS and KIDS (Sudden and unexpected death of any child under six, 24 hours) Tel. 1800 240 400
- Australian Funeral Directors Association Tel. (03) 9859 9571

Things to remember

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- The hospital will care for the deceased person until plans have been made with your chosen funeral director.
- The doctor will advise you if the death requires the attention of the Coroner.

This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:

Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement

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