

Funeral Directors
ASSOCIATION OF NZ
MEMBER

As proud members of the Funeral Directors Association of New Zealand, we adhere to standards and operational procedures that the association requires from us. When we're entrusted with a loved one, they are always treated with genuine compassion and respect.

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Continuing Care After Death

When someone you've cared for, and possibly grown close to, passes away it can be an upsetting time. Providing the right care for someone after death is so important: for the family, for the funeral home and, of course, for yourself.

Knowing you have done the right thing, and understanding why, can greatly help your own confidence at this time and can help your own grief journey.

By following some simple steps, you can be sure that you're continuing to provide the best care, even after they've died.

What to Do Next

Please note: any care provided must align with the family's, or the deceased's cultural expectations.

1. Lower the Bed

As soon as possible, lower the bed flat. Leave the deceased with one pillow and rest their hands beside them or on their stomach. This creates a more natural, rested appearance and keeps them in a position that makes removing and putting on clothing easier. If they pass away on their side, move them gently onto their back and straighten their legs, if possible.

Remember, the position they are in at this time is most likely how they will remain.

2. Close Their Eyes and Mouth

Closing the eyes and mouth allows a more dignified appearance while someone remains in your care. A closed mouth can help prevent the possibility of bugs entering, if there is any delay before the transfer takes place. We will always ensure the mouth and eyes are closed once they are in our care, even if you have been unable to do so. You can use a rolled-up towel under their chin to help you. Be sure to avoid wrapping anything around their head or using too much pressure. This can leave marks.

Applying a small amount of vaseline to the lower eyelid and gently closing down the upper lid can help the eyes to stay closed during the time they remain with you.

3. Insert Their Dentures

If they wore dentures, please put them back in. If they had dentures that they didn't like to wear or that didn't fit, there is no need to put them in. We will take them with us so please leave them somewhere accessible, like the bedside table.

4. Wash the Deceased

It's quite common for care staff to wash someone as part of their final care. We wash and dress them again once they're at our funeral home. It's best to change them into clothes that are easy to put on and remove, like a nightie or pyjamas. If provided, we will take away the clothing their loved ones want them to wear during the funeral. You are welcome to leave catheters or IV points in place. However, if you do remove them, please cover the exit area to prevent any leaking.

5. Jewellery

Please ask the family if they want their loved one's jewellery to be taken off. If they do, make sure it's signed for and recorded.

6. In Case of Transfer

If there is an unexpected delay between the time of death and the funeral director being advised to come, keep the room cool by leaving a window open and possibly using a fan in summer. Cover the person with a light sheet only. Covering the face isn't usually necessary.

7. When to Contact Morris & Morris Funerals

If hospital or rest home staff contact us to advise of the death of a resident, we will contact the family. This means we require a name and phone number for the next of kin. Any additional information at this time is appreciated. This includes cultural considerations or if the deceased is considerably overweight, so we can ensure the staff we send provide a dignified transfer.

If the family contact us first, we will then contact your facility. We will be able to transfer the person into our care once the doctor has been and completed the necessary paperwork, at a time that is agreed by both your facility and the family. It's very helpful if you can quickly check the paperwork for any obvious mistakes (such as a misspelt name or incorrect date of birth). If the paperwork has any mistakes, it won't be signed off. This can cause delay and upset for the family.

We will arrive with professional staff members who will work courteously with yourselves and the family to transfer their loved one in a dignified way. If a doctor is unable to come, we can still transfer the person into our care. However, the doctor will need to give us verbal agreement. This is because they'll need to come to one of our funeral homes to complete their checks and paperwork.