

What to do when someone close to you dies during the pandemic period



Contents

- What to do when someone close to you dies 2
- What happens next? 3
- Emergency burial information 4
- What do I need to know about coroner referrals
and post-mortem?..... 5
- How do I arrange a funeral? 6
- Barts Health Memorial Service 8
- Emotional and physical responses you
may experience 9
- Where to find help 12

What to do when someone close to you dies

Introduction

Although death is a natural part of life, the death of someone close to you can be a difficult, confusing and a life-changing experience.

This booklet is designed to help you through the first few days and includes the following information:

- Taking care of the practical arrangements
- The emotional and physical responses you may experience after someone close to you dies
- Where to get help and support.

Our hospital chaplains are available to offer support and advice to relatives and carers as well as patients. The Chaplaincy Team welcomes everyone, whatever your faith or beliefs and whether or not you follow a religion. They can be contacted via the hospital switchboard.

If you are unsure how to speak to bereaved children/teenagers about the death, booklets are available from the Bereavement Office. You will also find information on various websites that can provide support at the back of this booklet, including Winston's Wish and Child Bereavement UK.

What happens next?

During the pandemic

Please telephone the hospital bereavement office where your loved one died (see contact numbers below). Unfortunately, we are unable to meet face to face at this time. During the pandemic the death certification process has been simplified, the bereavement officer will explain the next steps to you:

Newham University Hospital:

Tel: 020 7363 8056 or 020 7363 8055

St Bartholomew's Hospital:

Tel: 020 3465 5889 or 020 3465 6892

The Royal London Hospital:

Tel: 020 3594 1050 or 020 3594 2030

Whipps Cross Hospital:

Tel: 020 8535 6628

Please note:

Due to the Pandemic there may be situations where we may have to move your loved one to another mortuary which on occasion, may not be on the hospital site.

Please be assured that if this occurs you will still be able to access support from bereavement and mortuary services at Barts Health.

What documents/information do I need to register the death? (please do not worry if you are unable to answer all the questions)

The registrar will require the following information:

- the date and place the person died
- the person's usual address
- the person's first name, middle names and surname (maiden name, if this applies)
- the person's date and place of birth (inc town, county, country)
- the person's occupation and the name and occupation of their husband, wife or civil partner (if the person was married or in a civil partnership)
- if the deceased received a pension or benefit from the Government
- the date of birth of their surviving husband, wife or civil partner.

Please note: If you don't have all the information listed above, it is worth checking with the registrar what information is acceptable.

Emergency Burial Information

Please visit the register office web page for the most up to date information:

www.islington.gov.uk

www.newham.gov.uk

www.towerhamlets.gov.uk

www.walthamforest.gov.uk

What do I need to know about coroner referral and post mortem?

Coroners are independent judicial officers who investigate someone's death. Circumstances where a coroner is involved, include:

- no doctor attended the deceased during his or her last illness
- although a doctor attended during the last illness the deceased was not seen within 28 days before or after death
- the cause of death appears to be unknown
- the death occurred during an operation or before recovery from the effects of an anaesthetic
- the death was due to an industrial accident, disease or poisoning
- the death was sudden or unexpected
- the death was unnatural
- the death was due to violence or neglect
- the death was in other suspicious circumstances
- the death occurred in prison or police custody.

Coroner's post-mortem

Coroner's post-mortems are carried out by law and therefore permission from relatives/next-of-kin is not needed. If you wish, you can be represented at the post-mortem examination by a doctor of your choice (there may be a charge for this).

Please telephone the appropriate Coroner's Office on the telephone number below and they will advise you further:

Newham and Whipps Cross Hospital deaths: Tel: 020 8496 5000

St Bartholomews' Hospital: Tel: 020 7332 1598

Royal London Hospital deaths: Tel: 020 7538 1201

Inquests

A coroner may decide to hold an inquest after a post mortem has been completed. An inquest is a public court hearing held by the coroner in order to establish who died, and how, when and where the death occurred. You can choose to attend, accompanied by a supporter.

The Coroners' Court Support Service is an independent charity.

Trained volunteers offer free, confidential, emotional support and practical help to bereaved families.

Helpline: 0300 111 2141

Email: helpline@ccss.org.uk

Can I see the body of my deceased relative?

Please speak to your chosen funeral director to arrange a family viewing of the deceased.

How do I arrange a funeral?

Your chosen funeral director will guide you.

The funeral director will arrange with the hospital to transfer your loved one to their mortuary.

More information about funeral directors can be obtained from:

National Association of Funeral Directors
618 Warwick Road, Solihull, West Midlands B91 1AA
Tel: 0121 230 1343, www.nafd.org.uk

National Society of Allied & Independent Funeral Directors
3 Bullfields, Sawbridgeworth, Herts CM21 9DB
Tel: 0127 972 6777, www.saif.org.uk,
Email: info@saif.org.uk

Down to Earth

Guides people in financial need to plan affordable meaningful funerals:

- information on how to plan a funeral
- support on making funerals affordable
- accessing financial support to help with funeral costs
- help with practical arrangements.

Tel: 020 8983 5055

Email: downtoearth@qsa.org.uk

The hospital has a Multi-faith Chaplaincy Team available to provide support and advice.

Funeral costs

You may be entitled to help with funeral costs if you receive certain social security benefits. Help and advice can be obtained from any benefits agency.

Website: www.dwp.gov.uk or

Citizen Advice Bureau Website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk.

Barts Health Memorial Service

An Annual Service of Remembrance is held at St. Paul's Cathedral on the last Sunday in October at 6pm for families and friends. People of all faiths and beliefs are welcome to attend. The service will include readings, music and poems from a variety of traditions. No ticket required.

Please phone the Chaplaincy Team for more details on
Tel: 020 3594 2070.

Emotional and physical responses you may experience

Although death is part of life, it can be a distressing and confusing experience. Each person's experience of the death of someone important to them will be unique and personal.

This part of the leaflet provides information about some of the emotional and physical symptoms you may have or experience when someone close to you dies. It also provides details of when to seek help and who you can approach for support.

Following the death of someone close to you, you might experience a wide range of emotions:

- You may feel an overwhelming sense of loss and sadness, while for others the events surrounding their relative/friend's death seem unreal; like a dream. They describe feeling numb and unable to cry or show any emotion.
- Sometimes people wish they could have done more for the person who has died and may experience this as feelings of guilt about certain things they believe they have or have not done.
- It is normal to feel angry about the circumstances of the death of your relative/friend, at the injustice or senselessness of it all and what seems as other people's inability to understand. Sometimes when a relative/friend has been suffering because of a long illness or in situations where people have been in difficult relationships, death can bring a sense of relief.
- Some people want to talk about the person who has died and the experiences they have shared. They want people around them as they find this comforting. Other people find it difficult to talk about the person who has died and how they feel. You may find yourself responding in either of these ways. This is a normal and expected response. During this time you may find you withdraw from contact with certain people for a while.

- For some people the death of someone close to them brings questions about the meaning of life and death. People sometimes become preoccupied with difficult or upsetting events and find themselves going over the details again and again to try and make sense of what has happened. As part of the process of trying to make sense of the death of their relative/friend some people struggle with the questions ‘why has it happened?’ and ‘why has it happened to me?’.
- People can also experience a wide range of physical responses when someone close to them dies. The most frequent experiences are tiredness, changes in sleeping and eating patterns, and difficulty concentrating and making decisions. Some people experience stiffness, localised pains, headaches and dizziness. Others have described a feeling of panic, which is associated with shortness of breath, excessive sweating and mild tremors or shaking. If you experience these symptoms, seek advice from your GP.

What can I do to look after myself while I grieve?

It is important that during this time you take good care of yourself by eating healthily, and establishing a routine of sleeping, exercise and relaxation.

Some people have found it helpful to talk to family, friends, other people that have been through a similar experience or a professional, for example a counsellor or a chaplain. Others have found keeping a journal, writing poems or letters and playing music comforting. Reading books about other people’s experience of death and bereavement can also be beneficial.

Anniversary dates and holidays can be difficult times. Creating rituals or ways to mark special days you shared with your relative/friend can help to make these days meaningful.

You may wish to seek help if:

- you want to talk to someone and you do not have people close to you who you can share your feelings and thoughts with
- over a period of time, you find it difficult to concentrate and make decisions
- you find yourself relying more on medication, drugs or alcohol
- you continue to find it difficult to sleep and eat
- over a period, you are avoiding places and people that remind you about the person who has died
- relationship difficulties or sexual problems develop
- over a period of time you are troubled by constant thinking or dreaming about the person who has died
- you are concerned about how your children are coping with a bereavement. Organisations supporting bereaved children and their families are included under 'Other support services'.

After the death of a relative/friend some people may find that life no longer makes sense or has meaning.

This can contribute to feelings of despair, hopelessness and suicidal thoughts. This can be part of the normal grieving process; however, please seek help from your GP or other professionals if you are worried about having suicidal thoughts or if you intend to end your life.

Support services

Children's Bereavement Services

Child Bereavement UK (Stratford Branch)

Provide support for bereaved children and their family.

Tel: 020 8519 7025

Website: www.childbereavementuk.org

Child Death Helpline

A free telephone service for people bereaved by the death of a child.

Tel: 0800 282 986

Website: www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk

Hope Again

Support young people living after loss; contact via email or call the FREE helpline.

Monday - Friday 9.30am - 5pm.

Tel: 0808 808 1677

Email: hopeagain@cruse.org.uk

Winston's Wish

Provide support and guidance to bereaved children, young people and their families.

Tel: 08088 02 021

Website: www.winstonswish.org.uk

Adult Bereavement Services

Age UK

Combines Age Concern and Help the Aged.

Advice line 0800 169 2081

Website: www.ageuk.org.uk

ASSIST Trauma Care

Offer therapeutic help to children, adults, individuals and families affected by a wide range of traumatic occurrences.

Tel: 01788 560 800

Email: admin@assisttraumacare.org.uk

www.assisttraumacare.org.uk

Bereavement Advice Centre

Not-for-profit organisation that provides practical information and advice on the procedures after the death of a person.

Tel: 0800 634 9494

www.bereavementadvice.org

Compassionate Friends

Support bereaved parents.

Tel: Helpline – 0345 123 2304

www.tcf.org.uk

Cruse Bereavement Care

Provide counselling, support and advice to bereaved people.

Tel: 0844 477 9400

www.cruse.org.uk

CRY (Cardiac Risk in the Young)

Tel: 01737 363 222

Website: www.c-r-y.org.uk

Macmillan Cancer Support

Tel: 0808 808 0000

Website: www.macmillan.org.uk

Samaritans

Samaritans offer confidential support around the clock to anyone that wants to talk through their problems (free phone from landline or mobile).

Tel: 116 123

Email: jo@samaritans.org

Sudden

Supporting people after sudden death.

Website: www.suddendeath.org

Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide

Offer support daily from 9am to 9pm.

Tel: 0300 111 5065

Website: www.uk-sobs.org.uk

The Silver Line

A free confidential helpline providing information, friendship and advice to older people, open 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

Tel: 0800 4 70 80 90 (free call)

Through Unity

Supporting families bereaved by homicide.

Tel: 07947 684 605

Victim Support

For the relatives of victims of homicide or unnatural deaths, or people who are the victims of crimes.

Weeknights 8pm to 8am,

Weekends Saturday 5pm to Monday 8am

Tel: 0808 1689 111

WAY Widowed and Young

For men and women aged 50 or under when their partner has died.

Website: www.widowedandyoung.org.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Please contact us if you need general information or advice about Trust services:
www.bartshealth.nhs.uk/pals

Over the phone or by email:

Newham University Hospital

Tel: 0207 363 9292

NUHpals.bartshealth@nhs.net

St Bartholomew's Hospital

Tel: 0203 465 5919

SBHpals.bartshealth@nhs.net

The Royal London & Mile End Hospitals

Tel: 0203 594 2040

RLHpals.bartshealth@nhs.net

Whipps Cross Hospital

Tel: 0208 535 6438

WXpals.bartshealth@nhs.net

