

HOME FUNERAL ALLIANCE

RELIGIOUS AND FAITH-BASED DEATHCARE GUIDE



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ORDER OF GUIDES

Buddhist Funerals and Deathcare

Islamic Funerals and Deathcare

Jewish Funerals and Deathcare

Sikh Funerals and Deathcare

Christian Funerals and Deathcare

Catholic Funerals and Deathcare

Hindu Funerals and Deathcare

Jain Funerals and Deathcare

Non-Religious, Spiritual, and Secular Deathcare

Buddhist Deathcare

BUDDHIST FUNERALS AND DEATH CARE

Buddhists believe in reincarnation meaning that when death occurs, the soul is born again into another body. With the ultimate goal of being freed from the cycle of life and death, Buddhists embrace simple, respectful, and tranquil practices around death care.



PREPARING FOR DEATH

Gathering close family and friends to reflect on the person's life and their hopes for the next can help make the transition peaceful. Sometimes, a person will wish to recite mantras or sutras near the end of life.



BODY CARE

Buddhists believe that the soul doesn't leave the body immediately after death, and should be left untouched for at least four hours in order to ease the soul's transition. Some Buddhists perform a cleansing ritual to purify the body before the funeral. Most Buddhists wish to be cremated but some prefer to be buried.



FUNERALS

Funerals are usually very simple and are held at a monastery or family home. Creating altars, lighting incense, and reciting sutras are common Buddhist funeral customs.



MOURNING AND GRIEF

Mourning periods vary based on tradition, but families and close friends usually host a reception where guests can continue to pay their respects and engage in merit making activities.

Buddhist Deathcare and Funeral Guidebook

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Buddhist Death Care Guidebook Overview

As in the case of all religions and belief systems, death holds a great deal of significance in Buddhism and is practiced diversely in the United States. Ways to care for and honor the dead depend on regional distinctions, family traditions, individual religious beliefs, and situational circumstances. It is important that those who are involved in Buddhist death care feel empowered to hold a funeral that reflects the wishes of the deceased and the family. Death care is highly personal and individualistic within Buddhism, and the diversity of the traditions are apparent in community death practices. It can be helpful to consult the leader of a local monastery, a monastic community, or religious chaplain who can help connect those close to death and their families to resources for Buddhists experiencing loss. A religious professional or funeral director can also help the family determine what kinds of personal elements they would like to include or not include in a funeral.

This guide is intended to be an overview of potential options and resources to help Buddhists prepare for death, care for the body, plan a funeral, and process their grief and mourning. It is not comprehensive and is not intended to be followed exactly. Please feel free to take any parts that feel meaningful and helpful and leave behind those that do not serve you. The process of death can be an overwhelming and difficult time, and this guide is one resource intended to help people navigate it. For more information on how to hold an independent or home funeral, please visit the Home Funeral Alliance at [Home Funeral Alliance](https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/), <https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/>.

Buddhism and Beliefs Surrounding Death

Core Buddhist beliefs are centered around the idea of saṃsāra, which is the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. Buddhists believe that every being has lived thousands of different lives in different bodies and realms and is reborn again and again. The kind of life someone will be reborn into is determined by the karmic merit accrued in one's previous life. The ultimate goal in Buddhism is to break the cycle of saṃsāra so that the soul will be liberated and achieve nirvana. Nearing death, a person may wish to meditate on their own life and share hopes for their next life.

The different realms that someone can be born into are:

- God's Realm (Deva)
- Human Realm (Manusya)
- Demi-God Realm (Asura)
- Animal Realm (Tiryagyoni)
- Hungry Ghosts Realm (Preta)
- Hellish Realm (Naraka)

****Visual depiction of the six realms on page below**

Buddhism teaches that death is not merely an end, but a transition. Beliefs about death emphasize the importance of caring for all beings and reminds

Buddhists to act with kindness and compassion in order to prepare for death.

Acceptance of the impermanent nature of life is meant to help Buddhists have a peaceful transition from one life to the next.

Resources For Buddhist Theology on Death:

- [Buddhist View on Death and Rebirth](#)
- [Wheel of Life \(Bhavacakra\) | Lion's Roar](#)
- [Death and the Afterlife in Buddhism](#)

WHEEL OF LIFE



Preparing For Death

Because death is such an important aspect of Buddhism, many Buddhists practice preparing for death their entire lives. They know that it is part of the natural cycle of existence and often practice accepting the reality of death long before it becomes apparent. While Buddhists may have a more accepting attitude towards death, they may still struggle with feelings of sorrow, regret, and fear. It is important that family, friends, and caretakers support them in whatever ways they need and do their best to make the transition peaceful.

Ideally, the environment of a Buddhist preparing for death should be calm and tranquil. They may wish for only close friends, family, and spiritual leaders to be present. It is generally a time of deep meditation for Buddhists as they reflect on the life they have lived, and caretakers should do their best to remain present and supportive. They may wish to talk to a member of their monastic community or they might prefer privacy. They may also wish to study Buddhist scripture and recite certain sutras and mantras. Regardless of their particular desires around the end of life, it is important to listen and support the person as they undergo the transition.

Resources on How to Prepare for the Death of a Buddhist and Provide Spiritual Comfort:

- [A Buddhist approach to death, dying and funerals – Poppy's Blog](#)
- [Buddhism - Death, dying and grief | Child Bereavement UK](#)
- [The Buddhist Society](#)

Caring for the Body

Following the Death

In Buddhist tradition, it is usually the responsibility of the family to care for the body after death. If this is not possible, a funeral director can be contacted to help with preparations of the body. After the moment of death, it is important that the body remains untouched for at least four hours. Buddhists believe that the soul does not immediately leave the body upon death, and that interacting with the body prematurely can disrupt the process of transition. After the four hour period, the body may be cleansed by the monastic community or family. After washing the body, it should be dressed in regular, everyday clothes. It is important that the clothes are not overly formal or decorative. Efforts should be made to keep the body cold until the funeral. If the deceased or family wishes for the body to be embalmed, this can be done in a funeral home and arranged through a funeral director. If the body is not going to a funeral home to be embalmed, it is typical that it will remain in the family home until the funeral. For more information about how to care for the body in a private residence consult the Home Funeral Alliance Guidebook which can be accessed at [Home Funeral Alliance](https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/), <https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/>.

Buddhist Cremations

Cremation is the typical choice for Buddhists due to the fact that Buddhism believes that the body is merely a vessel for the soul, and has little significance after death. It is also believed that cremation helps free the soul from the body. Usually, the family will honor the deceased by scattering their ashes in a moving body of water like a local river or stream. While cremation is the historic Buddhist tradition, burial is also an acceptable option. Some Buddhists prefer to be buried especially in a way that allows for natural decomposition of the body.

Environmentally Friendly Funeral Practices and Green Burials

Because Buddhism emphasizes the interconnectedness of all living beings, green burials or environmentally friendly burials can be good options. In a natural or eco-friendly burial, the body is buried with minimal materials to facilitate natural decomposition. Wrapping the body in cloth or using a casket made of easily decomposing materials are ways to have an eco-friendly burial. In order to legally have a natural or green burial, the body can not be embalmed. For more information on how to hold Buddhist funerals that are environmentally friendly, consult the resources below on “green burials”. Green burial practices compliment Buddhist ideas about the natural cycle of life and can be a meaningful way to honor a person who was fond of the environment and nature.

Resources on Body Care, Cremation, and Burials:

- [Understanding Buddhist Funeral Traditions: A Guide to Honoring Life and Death](#)
- [Care of the Body After Death](#)
- [Death in Cambodian Buddhist Culture - EthnoMed](#)
- Green Burials
 - [Comparing Natural Burial Traditions Across Different Religions - Serenity Ridge](#)
 - [Plan a Green Burial | Step-by-Step Eco Funeral Planning](#)

Buddhist Funerals

There are no specific requirements for how Buddhist funerals should be held. There is a great deal of flexibility and diversity in Buddhist death rituals in order to allow the family to decide what kind of funeral best suits their needs. They are usually simple and respectful, but the specific rituals can be chosen to reflect the needs of the family and circumstances.

Funeral Arrangements and Attire

Buddhist funerals are held either in a monastery or in a family home. It is typical that a monk or monastic community will lead the funeral proceedings by reciting a series of sutras and chants. The body will usually be present at the funeral in a simple, open casket. Funeral guests and mourners will be invited to place offerings around the body such as flowers, fruit, candles, and incense. A picture of the Buddha will be placed near the deceased. If the funeral is being held at home and led by a family member, there are a variety of rituals that can be done to honor the deceased. Some options include:

- Creating an altar to be decorated by funeral guests
- Placing an image of the deceased person and Buddha nearby the casket
- Lighting candles and burning incense
- Pouring water into an overflowing cup to symbolize having an open mind
- Chanting or singing sutras and mantras (the metta and heart sutras are popular choices at funerals)
- Offering gifts to the altar of the deceased like flowers, candles and fruits
- Ringing gongs or bells

Buddhist Funerals Cont.

If you want to send flowers, it is a good idea to ask the family about their preferences. Some Buddhist families prefer donations to charities in lieu of flowers while others appreciate the gesture and will display them at the funeral. When sending flowers, modest and simple arrangements are best.

After the funeral has ended, the casket will be sealed and transported to a crematorium or burial site. Sometimes, there will be a funeral procession in which pallbearers will carry the casket to and from the hearse.

Unless the family states otherwise, guests can expect to dress modestly in dark colors. Immediate members of the family may choose to wear white and request that the rest of the guests dress in black. If unsure, checking with the family about the dress code is a good idea. Guests may be asked to remove their shoes before entering the monastery or home where the funeral is being held.

Resources on Buddhist Funerals:

- <https://www.funeralpartners.co.uk/help-advice/arranging-a-funeral/types-of-funerals/buddhist-funerals/>
- <https://www.dignityfunerals.co.uk/arranging-a-funeral/types-of-funeral/religious-funerals/buddhist-funerals/>
- [Buddhist traditions in death and mourning | Empathy.](#)

Buddhist Mourning Period and Grief

The way Buddhist families and communities chose to grieve is extremely personal and should be tailored to best serve their individual needs. Some may want to be surrounded by family and loved ones while others might prefer private meditation and spiritual reflection. While there is no right or wrong way for Buddhists to mourn their dead, the religion has some traditions that are intended to support the mourners in their time of grief.

After the funeral ends, some mourners might want to hold a reception or continuation of gathering in their home. There, they may construct a new altar to continue honoring the deceased. They may also take special care to perform community-oriented acts of kindness to honor the passing of a loved one. These acts can include feeding the monastic community with home-cooked meals, volunteering, or donating to charities. It is believed that these acts not only honor the dead but also help the family with the process of grieving. The community usually supports the immediate family in mourning by cooking meals or bringing food, helping with childcare, performing daily tasks like cleaning, and offering to listen and be a source of comfort.

Buddhist Mourning Period and Grief

While there is no official timeline for the mourning period, many Buddhists will continue to honor the passing of a loved one by holding celebrations on the 3rd, 7th, 49th and 100th days after the death of a person. This creates more opportunities for community gathering and reflection on the passing of a loved one.

To express condolences for the family, phone calls, visits, and cards are appropriate. Some families may wish to receive flowers while others will not, so checking before ordering flowers is a good idea. Empathic gestures, small acts of kindness, and a willingness to listen are all ways in which people can express support for a grieving family.

Resources on Buddhist Grieving and Mourning:

- [Buddhism: Periods of Mourning | eCondolence.com](#)
- [How Buddhism's "Built-In Grievance Process" Helped Me](#)

Complete List of Online Resources

Home Funeral Alliance

- [Home Funeral Alliance](https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/) - <https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/>
- State Laws:
 - [Home Funeral Alliance State Laws](#)

Resources For Buddhist Theology on Death:

- [Buddhist View on Death and Rebirth](#)
- [Wheel of Life \(Bhavacakra\) | Lion's Roar](#)
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Resources on How to Prepare for the Death of a Buddhist and Provide Spiritual Comfort:

- [A Buddhist approach to death, dying and funerals – Poppy's Blog](#)
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- [The Buddhist Society](#)

Resources on Body Care, Cremation, and Burials:

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- [Death in Cambodian Buddhist Culture - EthnoMed](#)
- Green Burials
 - [Comparing Natural Burial Traditions Across Different Religions - Serenity Ridge](#)
 - [Plan a Green Burial | Step-by-Step Eco Funeral Planning](#)

Resources on Buddhist Funerals:

- [Buddhist funeral services and death rites](#)
- [Buddhist Funeral Customs](#)
- [Buddhist traditions in death and mourning | Empathy](#)

Resources on Buddhist Grieving and Mourning:

- [Buddhism: Periods of Mourning | eCondolence.com](#)
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Islamic Deathcare

Islamic Funerals and Death Practices



Islamic Death Care



During a period of death, Islamic tradition keeps in mind the 5 pillars of Islam: declaration of faith, prayer, almsgiving, fasting, and pilgrimage. Death is understood to be a natural event and is a time for community reflection on God and the life a person has lived before their return to God.

Preparing for Death

During the end of life, some Muslims may adhere to specific dietary requirements and request to perform a daily washing ritual known as Wudu.

They may wish for their bed to be positioned to face the direction of Mecca or recite specific prayers such as the Shahadah. An Imam can facilitate any religious wishes at the end of life.

Caring for the Body

Funeral arrangements begin immediately after death and the body may be moved to a funeral home. There, family members (usually of the same sex) perform a ritual washing of the body known as the Ghusl (غسل), which signifies spiritual purity. The body is then wrapped in a plain white sheet called a kafan before burial.

Islamic Funerals

Simple burial is the most common funeral practice for Muslims. Often held in mosques, the funeral consists of specific rituals and prayers before the body is transferred to a burial site. The site should face Mecca and be marked with a small, flat stone to identify the final resting place.

Mourning

Expressions of mourning are very personal to each Muslim community. Friends and family may bring food to the home of the mourners, and visit them following the funeral. Because Muslims believe that death is part of God's will, silent prayer, reflection, and meditation on scripture are typical ways of mourning loss.



Islamic Deathcare and Funeral Guidebook

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Islamic Death Care Guidebook Overview

As in the case of all religions and belief systems, death holds a great deal of significance in Islam and is practiced diversely in the United States. Ways to care for and honor the dead depend on family traditions, individual religious beliefs, and situational circumstances. It is important that those who are practicing Islamic death care feel empowered to hold a funeral that reflects the wishes of the deceased and the family. Death care is highly personal and individualistic within Islam, and the diversity of the traditions are apparent in community death practices. It can be helpful to consult a local Imam, (religious leader of a mosque), or religious chaplain who can help connect those close to death and their families to resources for Muslims experiencing loss. A religious professional or funeral director can also help the family determine what kinds of personal elements they would like to include or not include in a funeral.

This guide is intended to be an overview of potential options and resources to help Muslims prepare for death, care for the body, plan a funeral, and process their grief and mourning. It is not comprehensive and is not intended to be followed exactly. Please feel free to take any parts that feel meaningful and helpful and leave behind those that do not serve you. The process of death can be an overwhelming and difficult time, and this guide is one resource intended to help people navigate it.

For more information on how to hold an independent or home funeral, please visit the Home Funeral Alliance at [Home Funeral Alliance](https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/), <https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/>.

Islam and Beliefs Surrounding Death

Islamic death care and funerals tend to emphasize the Five Pillars of Islam, which are core aspects of the faith intended to ground Muslims in their moral and spiritual life.

The Five Pillars of Islam are:

1. The Profession of Faith (Shahadah)
2. Daily Prayer (Salah)
3. Almsgiving (Zakat)
4. Fasting (Sawm)
5. Pilgrimage to the Mecca (Hajj)

The Qur'an says that death is a natural transition from this life to an afterlife and that it is part of Allah's will. The belief is that upon death, the soul separates from the body and is reunited with Allah in an afterlife. The Qur'an also believes in a Judgement Day in which the souls of those who have died will be resurrected and eventually ushered into a final and eternal afterlife with Allah. The Qur'an is an essential resource during times of loss as it offers words of comfort and support to those preparing for and experiencing death and emphasizes the natural inevitability of the end of life.

Resources For Islamic Theology on Death:

- [Death and its hardships | Resurrection \(Ma'ad\) in the Quran | Al-Islam.org](#)
- [5 Verses From the Holy Quran on Death | The Muslim Vibe](#)
- [Surah Al-Anbiya Ayah 35 - Read, Listen, Translation, Tafsir - Quran.com](#)

Preparing For Death

Redemptive Suffering

The suffering that is experienced at the end of one's life is sometimes thought of as redemptive suffering in the Muslim faith. Redemptive suffering is usually seen as a kind of atonement which allows one to demonstrate their faithfulness to Allah by demonstrating patience and accepting the suffering as a part of their divine will. Practicing redemptive suffering is also a kind of spiritual purification and can provide comfort to those preparing for death.

Sometimes, if someone is practicing redemptive suffering, they will request that certain medical interventions be avoided such as pain management medication and sedation. These requests should be granted to the best of the caretaker's ability.

Facing Mecca

The Holy Kaaba in the Grand Mosque is located in Makkah, Saudi Arabia and is the anchor of worship for Muslims globally. Muslims who perform the Salah typically face in the direction of the Kaaba as they pray. This acts as a symbol of global unity as well as unwavering faith and devotion.

During the end of a Muslim's life, they may request to lie facing the Kaaba. The person's feet should be pointed in the direction of Mecca with their head propped up on a pillow. At the time of death, the deceased should be moved to face Mecca if not already positioned to be.

Spiritual Care and Nourishment

The time before death is an important period of reflection for Muslims. It is an opportunity to think about the life one has led and make final amends with family, friends, and Allah. Here are some examples of faith-based care:

- Wudu, a daily ritual washing (see resources below)
- Praying
- Reading and meditating on holy scripture like the Qur'an
- Consulting an Imam or religious chaplain
- Encouraging the person to speak about their hopes, fears, anxieties, and prayers for the transition to the afterlife

Some Muslims believe that one should recite the Shahadah (a declaration of faith) right before death. If possible, caregivers and family can assist the dying with reciting these words. See the resources below on specific information about how to recite the Shahadah.

At the time of death, non-Muslims may be asked to leave the room to allow for more intimacy and privacy during the passing. These requests should be honored if circumstances allow. Families may wish to recite prayers over the body which can be led by a member of the family or a spiritual leader.

Resources on How to Prepare for the Death of a Muslim and Provide Spiritual Comfort:

- [End-of-Life Care Considerations for Muslim Patients](#)
- [Why Do Muslims Pray Towards Mecca? | Qibla Direction | Islamic Landmarks](#)
- [Chapter 2 - How to Make Wudu, Step by Step - Masjid ar-Rahmah | Mosque of Mercy](#)
- [5 Duas To Make When Someone Dies From The Quran And Sunnah | As-Salaam Humanitarian Foundation](#)
- [End-of-Life Care Considerations for Muslim Patients | Palliative Care Network of Wisconsin](#)
- [The Culture Connection: Muslim End-of-Life Practices](#)
- [The Culture Connection: Muslim Practices at the Time of Death](#)
- Information on Wudu:
 - [Muslim End-of-Life Care: Islamic Hospice Practices](#)

Caring for the Body

Following the Death

After the moment of death, a close family member may close the eyes and mouth of the deceased. The body is also usually covered in a white cloth. Islamic law dictates that funeral arrangements should begin immediately after death. If arrangements have been made ahead of time with a funeral home, the director is usually contacted to come transport the body to the funeral home. If the family has made other decisions about where the body will be cared for until the funeral, they may want to make a transport plan ahead of time. For more information about how to care for the body in a private residence consult the Home Funeral Alliance Guidebook which can be accessed at [Home Funeral Alliance](https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/), <https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/>.

Islamic Burials

Islamic tradition historically does not allow for the body to be embalmed or cremated, and indicates that burial is the most appropriate option. Islamic law says that the body should be treated with the same respect in death as it was in life which translates to being buried in the earth. Islam also strictly prohibits embalming, viewing of the body, and autopsy (unless legally required) however, organ donation is permitted. Muslim burials are prompt and usually take place 24-48 hours after the death.

The Ghusl (غسل) and Kafan

Wherever the body is being cared for prior to the funeral, it is traditional that the family members who are of the same sex as the deceased will perform a Ghusl (غسل), or full-body purification. The Ghusl (غسل) signifies spiritual purity, dignity, and respect and is the final act of care for the deceased. The ritual may be led by a close member of the family, an Imam, or spiritual chaplain. Modesty and dignity are maintained for the deceased throughout the entire ritual. Refer to the resources below for specific step-by-step instructions for the Ghusl (غسل).

After the Ghusl (غسل) is complete, the body is wrapped in a plain, white cloth called a kafan (shroud). The kafan should be non-decorative and simple to symbolize dignity and equality in death. It also demonstrates that in death, all earthly possessions are left behind. For men, the kafan consists of three pieces and for women it consists of five. The body will be buried in this kafan to allow for natural decomposition and the return of the body to the earth.

Environmentally Friendly Funeral Practices and Green Burials

Islamic burials are already very environmentally friendly due to the fact that bodies are buried in natural materials that decompose easily and are not embalmed. For more information on how to hold Islamic funerals that are environmentally friendly, consult the resources below on “green burials”. Combining green burial practices with the already eco-friendly Islamic traditions can be a meaningful way to honor a person who was fond of the environment and nature.

Resources on Body Care and Burial Practices:

- Ghusl, The Islamic Ritual Washing
 - [Ritual Ghusl Washing](#)
 - [Ghusl - MUSLIM FUNERAL SERVICES](#)
 - [Shrouding and Washing - National Burial Council](#)
- [Care of the Muslim Patient After Death | FIW Online](#)
- [Do Muslims Believe in Cremation? Islamic Teachings Explained | After®.com Blog](#)
- [Muslim Burial Practices](#)
- Green Burials
 - [The Soulful Elegance of Islamic Green Burial Practices - Muslim Climate Watch](#)
 - [Comparing Natural Burial Traditions Across Different Religions - Serenity Ridge](#)
 - [Plan a Green Burial | Step-by-Step Eco Funeral Planning](#)

Islamic Funerals

Funeral Arrangements and Attire

Muslim funerals tend to be fairly formal and are typically held in a mosque. Led by a local Imam, the congregation usually recites the Ṣalāt al-Janāzah which is a traditional Islamic funeral prayer. The prayer blesses all Muslims who have died and asks for them to be pardoned by Allah. The congregation is arranged to face the body wrapped in the Kafan which is in the direction of Mecca. Once all of the prayers are complete, the body is transferred to the burial site where those who wish to attend the burial will meet.

Unless the family states otherwise, guests can expect to dress modestly in dark colors. Women are typically expected to cover their heads. Guests may be asked to remove their shoes before entering the mosque or home where the funeral is being held.

Burial Proceedings

At the chosen burial site, the grave should be positioned in a way that allows the deceased to be facing Mecca. Additional prayers may be recited by the family as the body is lowered in the kafan. Usually, the grave will be lined with flat stones or wood in order to create a barrier between the body and ground. Finally, each mourner is expected to place three handfuls of dirt into the grave to symbolize the communal loss and effort.

Markings for the final resting place should be simple. A small, non-decorative stone is appropriate to indicate the grave. The simplicity in grave markings is symbolic and serves as a reminder that all are equal in death.

Resources on Muslim Funerals and Burial:

- [Muslim Funeral Services](#)
- [The Soulful Elegance of Islamic Green Burial Practices - Muslim Climate Watch](#)
- [Muslim Cultural Funeral Services](#)
- [Islam: Periods of Mourning](#)
- [How to Pray the Janazah \(funeral\) Prayer – AMAA Muslim Cemetery](#)

Muslim Mourning Period and Grief

The way Muslim families and communities chose to grieve is extremely personal and should be tailored to best serve their individual needs. Some may want to be surrounded by family and loved ones while others might prefer private mediation and spiritual reflection. While there is no right or wrong way for Muslims to mourn their dead, Islamic religion has some traditions that are intended to support the mourners in their time of grief. After the funeral ends, some mourners might want to hold a reception or continuation of gathering in their home. There, they may read the Qur'an together, pray, and share memories of the deceased. The community usually supports the immediate family in mourning by cooking meals or bringing food, helping with childcare, performing daily tasks like cleaning, and offering to listen and be a source of comfort.

The official mourning period usually ceases after three days, but some Muslims will continue to mourn for up to forty days. There is a special mourning period for widows which lasts for four weeks and ten days. During this time, she is to avoid interacting with any men who could be seen as suitors and to generally avoid contact with the outside world. Community members typically step up to help her perform daily tasks during this time.

To express condolences for the family, phone calls, visits, and cards are appropriate. Some families may wish to receive flowers while others will not, so checking before ordering flowers is a good idea. Empathic gestures, small acts of kindness, and a willingness to listen are all ways in which people can express support for a grieving family.

Resources on Muslim Grieving and Mourning:

- [Basic rules of Islamic funerals](#)
- [How to Pray the Janazah \(funeral\) Prayer – AMAA Muslim Cemetery](#)
- [Islam: Periods of Mourning Coping with Grief: A Spiritual and Psychological Guide](#)
- [Muslim traditions in mourning and grief | Empathy](#)

Complete List of Online Resources

Home Funeral Alliance

- [Home Funeral Alliance](https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/) - <https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/>
- State Laws:
 - [Home Funeral Alliance State Laws](#)

Resources For Islamic Theology on Death:

- [Death and its hardships | Resurrection \(Ma'ad\) in the Quran | Al-Islam.org](#)
- [5 Verses From the Holy Quran on Death | The Muslim Vibe](#)
- [Surah Al-Anbiya Ayah 35 - Read, Listen, Translation, Tafsir - Quran.com](#)

Resources on How to Prepare for the Death of a Muslim and Provide Spiritual Comfort:

- [End-of-Life Care Considerations for Muslim Patients](#)
- [Why Do Muslims Pray Towards Mecca? | Qibla Direction | Islamic Landmarks](#)
- [Chapter 2 - How to Make Wudu, Step by Step - Masjid ar-Rahmah | Mosque of Mercy](#)
- [5 Duas To Make When Someone Dies From The Quran And Sunnah | As-Salaam Humanitarian Foundation](#)
- [End-of-Life Care Considerations for Muslim Patients | Palliative Care Network of Wisconsin](#)
- [Muslim End-of-Life Care: Islamic Hospice Practices](#)
- [The Culture Connection: Muslim End-of-Life Practices](#)
- [The Culture Connection: Muslim Practices at the Time of Death](#)

Resources on Body Care and Burial Practices:

- Ghusl, The Islamic Ritual Washing
 - [Ritual of Ghusl Washing](#)
 - [Ghusl - MUSLIM FUNERAL SERVICES](#)
 - [Shrouding and Washing - National Burial Council](#)
- [Care of the Muslim Patient After Death | FIW Online](#)
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- [Muslim Cultural Funeral Services](#)
- [Islam: Periods of Mourning](#)
- [How to Pray the Janazah \(funeral\) Prayer – AMAA Muslim Cemetery](#)

Resources on Prayers

- [Basic rules of Islamic funerals](#)
- [How to Pray the Janazah \(funeral\) Prayer – AMAA Muslim Cemetery](#)

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- [Basic rules of Islamic funerals](#)
- [How to Pray the Janazah \(funeral\) Prayer – AMAA Muslim Cemetery](#)
- [Islam: Periods of Mourning Coping with Grief: A Spiritual and Psychological Guide](#)
- [Muslim traditions in mourning and grief | Empathy](#)

Jewish Deathcare

JEWISH FUNERALS AND DEATH CARE

Preparing For Death



For Jews, the end of life is a time of reflection. When close to death, a person might wish to contact a rabbi. A rabbi can help facilitate any rituals or prayers that need to be said, and help the person write an ethical will.

Caring for the Body



Jewish communities typically bury their dead and allow for the body to decompose naturally. This upholds the Jewish belief that the body will return to the dust from which it was formed, mentioned in Genesis 3:19.

Jewish Funerals



Jewish funerals usually take place in a Jewish funeral home, a synagogue, graveside, or at a family home. A rabbi typically leads the funeral, reciting prayers, psalms, and scripture. Click the link below for more information on home funerals and burial options.

Mourning and Grief



The Jewish mourning period is called shiva, which usually lasts for seven days. It allows the family to process their grief and honor the person who has passed. These are usually times in which the community comes together to support the mourners.

Jewish Deathcare and Funeral Guidebook

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Jewish Death Care Guidebook Overview

As in the case of all religions and belief systems, death holds a great deal of significance in Judaism and is practiced diversely in the United States. Ways to care for and honor the dead depend on family traditions, individual religious beliefs, and situational circumstances. It is important that those who are practicing Jewish death care feel empowered to hold a funeral that reflects the wishes of the deceased and the family. Death care is highly personal and individualistic within Judaism, and the diversity of the traditions are apparent in community death practices. It can be helpful to consult a rabbi or religious chaplain who can help connect those close to death and their families to resources for Jews experiencing loss. A religious professional or funeral director can also help the family determine what kinds of personal elements they would like to include or not include in a funeral.

This guide is intended to be an overview of potential options and resources to help Jews prepare for death, care for the body, plan a funeral, and process their grief and mourning. It is not comprehensive and is not intended to be followed exactly. Please feel free to take any parts that feel meaningful and helpful and leave behind those that do not serve you. The process of death can be an overwhelming and difficult time, and this guide is one resource intended to help people navigate it.

For more information on how to hold an independent or home funeral, please visit the Home Funeral Alliance at [Home Funeral Alliance](https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/), <https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/>.

Judaism and Beliefs Surrounding Death

Similar to many other religious views, Judaism believes that death is a natural process and should not be viewed as a tragedy. Instead, it is understood that death is a part of God's will and full of meaning. Jewish ideas about an afterlife are very diverse, yet all forms of Judaism hold the belief that an afterlife exists. In the Talmud, it is called Sheol, although specifics about its nature are unclear. Some Jews believe that the afterlife looks similar to Christian ideas of Heaven, while others believe that the afterlife is the legacy that one leaves behind in their family and lived memory. There are parts of Jewish scripture that teach of a day of resurrection in which the bodies of those who have died will rise again to enjoy an eternal existence in Zion. The Jewish belief in an afterlife can take many forms and ultimately depends on a person's individual beliefs. While there is rich theology about a Jewish afterlife, it tends to not be the primary focus of the religion or in preparing for death. Instead, Jewish tradition focuses on the life that a person has lived, and making any final necessary amends and arrangements before death.

One common belief in Judaism is that death is simply a transitional phase in which the soul attached to a physical body in life, becomes detached in death. The soul is still on a spiritual journey, it just is no longer anchored to a physical vessel. In preparing for death, Jewish communities will support the dying by providing spiritual care intended to ease the transition from life to death.

Resources For Jewish Theology on Death:

- Introduction: How Jews Approach Death - Chabad.org
- Death & Bereavement in Judaism: Death and Mourning
- Jewish rituals for death and dying

Preparing For Death

Calling a Rabbi, the Viddui, and the Deathbed Vigil

Jews often begin preparing for death early in life, however when faced with imminent death, they may wish to take specific time to reflect on their lives. When death approaches, it is typical that a local rabbi will be called. The rabbi will be able to help facilitate any particular prayers and rituals the person might want. One such ritual is called viddui which is a kind of deathbed confession. It is a way to express any final regrets, doubts, and is an opportunity to reconcile with God. This prayer can be said by the dying person, or on their behalf by a rabbi or family member. A rabbi will also be able to help the person express any final wishes they have and make any final spiritual amends. The Jewish tradition encourages family and friends to participate in a deathbed vigil which involves there always being a person at the bedside of the dying person. This ritual upholds respect, dignity, and humanity for a person and ensures that they experience death surrounded by community.

Ethical Wills

Another tradition that some Jews participate in is the writing of an ethical will. An ethical will is written to be given to a person's children and descendants after that person has died. The letter usually expresses the most important lessons, values, and morals that the person would like to impart on their family. This tradition is one that dates back to biblical times and is an important way for Jews to leave a meaningful spiritual legacy. For more information on ethical wills, see the resource links below.

Orthodox Considerations

In the Orthodox Jewish community, there are a few particular considerations to keep in mind when caring for those nearing death. Because Orthodox Jews believe that every moment of life is precious, they value medical interventions that prolong it. This includes ventilators, pacemakers, supplemental oxygen, and medications. When a life-sustaining measure is implemented, it may not be discontinued as that would be seen as intentionally bringing death about sooner. It is also important that doctors, nurses, and other caregivers are of the same sex as the dying person, whenever possible. When it seems likely that a death will occur within the next 72 hours, the person may wish for a minyan, which is a group of ten Jewish adults who will stay near the dying person until death. A rabbi may be contacted to guide the family through any other particular rituals.

Resources on How to Prepare for the Death of a Jew and Provide Spiritual Comfort:

- [Preparing for Death | My Jewish Learning](#)
- [Jewish rituals for death and dying](#)
- Information on Vuddui
 - [Viddui: The Deathbed Confession | My Jewish Learning](#)
- Information on Ethical Wills:
 - [Writing and Reading Ethical Wills | My Jewish Learning](#)
- Orthodox Considerations
- [End-of-Life Care Considerations for the Orthodox Jewish Patient | Palliative Care Network of Wisconsin](#)

Caring for the Body

Stages of Mourning and Grief

Jewish tradition honors several different stages of grief and mourning after a person has died. The periods are Aninut, the Funeral, Shiva, Yizkor, Shloshem, the Unveiling/Memorial, and Yahrzeit. Each period has distinct traditions which all aim to help the family and community express grief and process the loss which affects their community.

Aninut

After the moment of death, a close family member may close the eyes and mouth of the deceased. The body is then immediately laid on the floor and is usually covered in a white cloth. Candles may be placed around the body and are lit to indicate the start of Aninut, which is the first stage of Jewish mourning. Blessings and prayers are usually said by the family. Then, the immediate family, (spouse, brothers, sisters, parents, and children), become onens, who are responsible for helping with funeral arrangements and care of the body. They will also take turns sitting with the body until burial to ensure that the body is never left alone.

If using a funeral home, they should be contacted for transport of the body immediately upon death. If the body is staying in the care of the family, they may wish to transport the body to a private residence for preparation. A ritual washing, known as the Tahara, and the covering of the body in a shroud is typical body care for Jewish deceased. This is an important moment that the family will usually want to be involved in, as it signifies the last act of kindness one can do for the person who has died. For more information about how to care for the body in a private residence consult the Home Funeral Alliance Guidebook which can be accessed at [Home Funeral Alliance](https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/), <https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/>.

Jewish Burials

Burials in the Jewish tradition must be done promptly and usually take place within 24 - 48 hours after the death occurs. Burial is considered the most acceptable way of caring for the body after death, however many who practice Reform Judaism wish to be cremated. Embalming, viewing of the body, and autopsy, (unless required by law), historically violate Jewish tradition. However, organ donation is acceptable and often encouraged.

The Jewish tradition of burying their dead is itself, a form of natural burial. There is no embalming of the body, and it is shrouded in plain, white sheets which lend themselves to natural decomposition. Often, the body is then placed in a casket made of soft wood which is completely biodegradable. The casket will eventually break down which allows for natural decomposition and the return of the body to the earth. Jewish scripture tells that the body will return to the dust that it was formed from, (see Genesis 3:19), which aligns with the principles of a natural burial. For more information on how to hold Jewish funerals that are environmentally friendly, consult the resources below on “green burials”. Combining green burial practices with the already eco-friendly Jewish traditions can be a meaningful way to honor a person who was fond of the environment and nature.

Resources on Body Care and Burial Practices:

- [The First Things to Do Right After Passing - Immediate issues and concerns following a death - Chabad.org](#)
- [Jewish Funeral Customs](#)
- [Traditional Jewish Ritual and Mourning Practices | JCFS](#)
- [Genesis 3 NIV - The Fall - Now the serpent was more - Bible Gateway](#)
- Green Burials
 - [How Jewish Burials are Actually Green Burials, Too | Reform Judaism](#)
 - [Comparing Natural Burial Traditions Across Different Religions - Serenity Ridge](#)
 - [Plan a Green Burial | Step-by-Step Eco Funeral Planning](#)

Jewish Funerals

Funeral Arrangements and Attire and Burial Proceedings

Jewish funerals are either held in a Jewish funeral home, at graveside, in a synagogue, or at a family home. The family may have a specific burial plot in which all members of the family are usually buried. The person who has died may have left particular requests regarding the funeral arrangements, which should be honored to the best of the family's ability.

Led by a local rabbi, the funeral includes the recitation of many prayers, psalms, and other kinds of liturgy. Funeral guests usually tear a small piece of clothing or black cloth, (to be provided by the rabbi or funeral director), to represent the end of the physical relationship with the deceased, although their emotional and spiritual relationships are everlasting. While they do this ritual, the rabbi and congregation recite the "Baruch Dayan Emet", which is a prayer meaning "God is the True Judge".

Unless the family states otherwise, guests can expect to dress modestly in dark colors like black, navy, and dark blue. Men usually wear a Kippah.

Flowers are not appropriate at Jewish funerals as they are associated with joyous celebrations. For the same reason, music is not played and songs are not typically sung.

After the end of the prayers and psalms, the body is lowered into the grave. There is usually a brief memorial or unveiling ceremony after the grave marker is placed in which a rabbi recites some psalms and prayers over the grave. After loved ones have said their final goodbyes, they will typically proceed to the family home where they will begin to observe shiva. In the Orthodox Jewish tradition, the person should be buried with their Book of Prayers.

Resources on Jewish Funerals and Burial:

- [Death & Bereavement in Judaism: Death and Mourning](#)
- [Jewish Funeral Etiquette Guide | What to Wear to a Funeral](#)
- [What to Wear to a Jewish Funeral: A Comprehensive Guide t...](#)
- [Basic Laws of a Jewish Funeral - Chabad.org](#)
- [Your paragraph text](#)
- [Preparing for a Jewish Funeral: A Guide | Reform Judaism](#)
- [Orthodox Judaism - Death, dying & grief | Child Bereavement UK](#)

Jewish Mourning Period and Grief

Sitting Shiva

Shiva is a typical seven day mourning period that is observed by many Jewish communities. It functions to honor the dead and allow the family to process their feelings of grief and sorrow. Some communities may observe the full seven day period while others may want to have a shorter timeframe. Consulting a rabbi can be a good way to determine the appropriate length of shiva to fit the needs of each community.

Shiva usually starts immediately after the burial where a close family friend or extended family member prepares a meal. Bagels and lox, bread, hard-boiled eggs, and other round foods are usually served to symbolize the cyclical nature of life and death. As guests enter the home, they each take a turn washing their hands at the door in a basin of water. This historically was a way for those who buried the body to clean their hands before a meal and symbolizes the transition from the funeral to the mourning period.

A shiva candle is usually lit which is intended to stay burning for the entire seven day period. Various religious ceremonies may be held at the house over the period of shiva which allow the community different opportunities to express their feelings of grief and sorrow. Many of the rituals acknowledge the presence of God in the world and recognize the fact that death is ultimately a part of his will and a natural process of life.

Customs Around Shiva

Shiva customs usually include abstaining from using technology and looking in mirrors to avoid concerns with vanity. Mourners usually sit low to the ground on stools or cushions to acknowledge the low spirits. Open expressions of grief like crying are encouraged and are thought to help the family move on from the death in a healthy and meaningful way. Stories and memories of the person's life may be shared with the community and family.

Mourners are allowed and encouraged to visit the family multiple times during shiva as community gathering is a significant part of the mourning process. Flowers and gifts are not acceptable gifts during shiva, with the exception of food. Guests are encouraged to bring food and alcohol to the family to ease their grieving. The Kaddish is a prayer said daily during the shiva which is a good time for mourners to gather at the house where shiva is taking place. The prayer is meant to be said in community and reminds each member of the Jewish tradition of the greatness of God.

The End of Shiva and Processing Grief Afterwards

The end of shiva is sometimes marked by taking a walk around the block - the first time that the family will have left the house in seven days. It marks the reintegration of the mourners into daily life.

There are many opportunities for the family to continue honoring their dead and grieving once shiva ends. Ceremonies of remembrance take place during high holidays which are known as yizkor. Shloshem is the first month of mourning after the death which is characterized by continuing to say a daily Kaddish and is celebrated by a gathering in which poems and prayers about the deceased are shared. The yahrzeit is the yearly anniversary of the death in which a 24-hour candle is lit to honor the dead. Families may visit the gravesite and hold small celebrations to commemorate the deceased and hold them in community memory.

Resources on Jewish Grieving and Mourning:

- [Everything You Need to Know About the Jewish Custom of Shiva | Reform Judaism](#)
- [The Mourner's Kaddish | Sharon Memorial Park](#)
- [What is the 7-Day Jewish Death? Understanding the Signifi...](#)
- [Traditional Jewish Ritual and Mourning Practices | JCFS](#)
- [Kaddish Observances - Chabad.org](#)
- [Jewish Funerals and Burial](#)

Complete List of Online Resources

Home Funeral Alliance

- [Home Funeral Alliance](https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/) - <https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/>
- State Laws:
 - [Home Funeral Alliance State Laws](#)

Resources For Jewish Theology on Death:

- [Introduction: How Jews Approach Death - Chabad.org](#)
- [Death & Bereavement in Judaism: Death and Mourning](#)
- [Jewish rituals for death and dying](#)

Resources on How to Prepare for the Death of a Jew and Provide Spiritual Comfort:

- [Preparing for Death | My Jewish Learning](#)
- [Jewish rituals for death and dying](#)
- Information on Vuddui
 - [Viddui: The Deathbed Confession | My Jewish Learning](#)
- Information on Ethical Wills:
 - [Writing and Reading Ethical Wills | My Jewish Learning](#)
- Orthodox Considerations
- [End-of-Life Care Considerations for the Orthodox Jewish Patient | Palliative Care Network of Wisconsin](#)

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 - [Plan a Green Burial | Step-by-Step Eco Funeral Planning](#)

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- [What to Wear to a Jewish Funeral: A Comprehensive Guide t...](#)
- [Basic Laws of a Jewish Funeral - Chabad.org](#)
- [Jewish Traditions for Death, Burial, and Mourning](#)
- [Preparing for a Jewish Funeral: A Guide | Reform Judaism](#)
- [Orthodox Judaism - Death, dying & grief | Child Bereavement UK](#)

Resources on Jewish Grieving and Mourning:

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- [The Mourner's Kaddish | Sharon Memorial Park](#)
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- [Kaddish Observances - Chabad.org](#)
- [Jewish Funerals and Burial](#)

Sikh Deathcare

SIKH FUNERALS AND DEATH CARE



PREPARING FOR DEATH

Sikhs who are preparing for death often use it as a time for reflection. Reciting prayers, studying scripture, and expressing hopes for the next life may bring comfort. Many will focus attention on accepting death as a natural process, and use it as an opportunity to reunite with Waheguru, the divine.



CARING FOR THE BODY

Rituals to care for the body are simple and respectful. Before the funeral, members of the family will perform a ritual washing, clothing, and placing the five articles of the Sikh faith with the body. The body is then surrounded with chrysanthemums. Most Sikhs are cremated. Click the link below for information about eco-friendly options.

SIKH FUNERALS

Sikh funerals are typically very simple and encourage the family to mourn in whatever ways are meaningful. Funerals include the recitation of prayers which are led by the granthi. The body is then transported to the crematorium where a final prayer is said to release the deceased from the cycle of saṃsāra.

SIKH MOURNING PERIOD

The mourning period for Sikhs varies, and looks different for each community. Typically, the holy scripture, Sri Guru Sahib, is read over a period of a couple days. Guests may bring vegetarian food to support the family and a one year anniversary celebration may take place to honor the deceased.



Sikh Deathcare and Funeral Guidebook

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Sikh Death Care Guidebook Overview

As in the case of all religions and belief systems, death holds a great deal of significance in Sikhism and is practiced diversely in the United States. Ways to care for and honor the dead depend on family traditions, individual religious beliefs, and situational circumstances. It is important that those who are practicing Sikh death care feel empowered to hold a funeral that reflects the wishes of the deceased and the family. Death care is highly personal and individualistic within Sikhism, and the diversity of the traditions are apparent in community death practices. It can be helpful to consult a local granthi, (a Sikh religious leader), or religious chaplain who can help connect those close to death and their families to resources for Sikhs experiencing loss. A religious professional or funeral director can also help the family determine what kinds of personal elements they would like to include or not include in a funeral.

This guide is intended to be an overview of potential options and resources to help Sikhs prepare for death, care for the body, plan a funeral, and process their grief and mourning. It is not comprehensive and is not intended to be followed exactly. Please feel free to take any parts that feel meaningful and helpful and leave behind those that do not serve you. The process of death can be an overwhelming and difficult time, and this guide is one resource intended to help people navigate it.

For more information on how to hold an independent or home funeral, please visit the Home Funeral Alliance at [Home Funeral Alliance](https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/), <https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/>.

Sikhism and Beliefs Surrounding Death

Similarly to Buddhism and Hinduism, Sikhism teaches that death is a natural step in the cycle of life. Sikhism calls this loop *saṃsāra*, which is the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. Therefore, death is not seen as an end, but as a transition period into a different life. Like Buddhists, Sikhs believe that every being has lived thousands of different lives in different bodies and realms and is reborn again and again. The kind of life someone will be reborn into is determined by the karmic merit accrued in one's previous life. Sikhs aspire to break the cycle of *saṃsāra* so that the soul will become free and the will be reunited with Waheguru, the divine. Before a soul can be liberated from the cycle, they may live in over 8.4 million forms, giving them many opportunities to practice becoming free.

Sikhs believe in living a life that will ultimately lead to being free from *saṃsāra*, and abide by certain values to do so. They practice non-attachment, humility and kindness for others, and avoiding the Five Thieves which are: desire, anger, greed, attachment, and ego.

While Sikhs do not view death as a tragedy, funerals are very important events as they allow for the person who has died to be honored while providing opportunities for the family to grieve. Death care for Sikhs are centered around values of acceptance, humility, and devotion to God. They prioritize creating an environment of simplicity, equality, and dignity around death practices.

Resources For Sikh Theology on Death:

- [What Is Sikh Cremation? Understanding the Traditions and Beliefs](#)
- [Understanding Death in Sikhism's Core Beliefs](#)
- [Sikhism - Death, dying and grief | Child Bereavement UK](#)

Preparing For Death

While there are no specific rituals for how Sikhs should prepare for death, their religious tradition can help inform best practices for dealing with the transition. When Sikhs are facing death, they typically use it as an opportunity for reflection. Rather than expressing grief and sorrow, they will try to focus on the acceptance of death and their spiritual connection with Waheguru. They may do this by reciting certain prayers or studying specific teachings presented in Sikh scripture. They may also reflect on their lifetime and express wishes and hopes for their next life. Spending time with a person who is dying and providing comfort, empathy, and a listening ear are good ways to support them through the transition.

Resources on How to Prepare for the Death of a Sikh and Provide Spiritual Comfort:

- [Sikh Death Ceremonies and Protocols](#)
- [End of Life Reference Guide – Sikh Dharma International](#)
- [Sikhism: Final Rites](#)

Caring for the Body

Following the Death

After the moment of death, a close family member may wish to close the eyes and mouth of the deceased. There are few specific guidelines about how to care for a Sikh person who has died. Rituals are usually simple, respectful, and brief. Typically, after a death, the body is not moved or touched until the day before the funeral. Then, the body may undergo a ritual washing and the clothes can be exchanged for clean, fresh ones. Many Sikhs will transfer the body to a funeral home for preparation, but families may also want to prepare the body themselves in a family home or private residence. For more information about how to care for the body in a private residence consult the Home Funeral Alliance Guidebook which can be accessed at [Home Funeral Alliance](https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/), <https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/>.

Ritual Washing and Clothing

Regardless of if the body is in a funeral home or private residence, the washing should be done by very close members of the family who are of the same sex. The body and hair are washed with yogurt to soften and purify it before burial. This is followed by a rinsing with warm soap and water and the dressing of the body in clean clothes. The body will remain in the same location overnight until the funeral the following day. Before cremation or burial, if the person had been baptized, their body will be laid with the five articles of the Sikh faith called the karkars, which include:

- Kesh (uncut hair)
- Kangha (small wooden comb)
- Kachha (undergarment)
- Karha (iron bracelet)
- Kirpan (sword/dagger)

The body is usually surrounded with white and orange chrysanthemums.

Sikh Cremations

While there is no rule against burying a Sikh person, cremation is the preferred choice. This is because the body holds no significance in the religion other than to house the soul. The person may wish for their ashes to be scattered somewhere meaningful in nature such as in a river. Sikh cremations are prompt and usually take place as soon as possible after the death. Because the body is not embalmed, the funeral arrangements must happen somewhat quickly to preserve the body until the cremation. There is not typically a viewing of the body before the funeral.

Environmentally Friendly Disposition

Because Sikhs are not usually embalmed, they are able to choose a variety of environmentally friendly disposition options. Options like human composting and water cremation allow the body of the deceased to be converted into nutrient rich fertilizer. The fertilizer can then be used to grow trees, plants, and gardens or donated to conservation projects. Organ donation and the donation of a body to science are also meaningful ways for Sikhs to give to humanist causes. For more information on how to hold Sikh funerals that are environmentally friendly, consult the resources below on human composting and water cremation. Combining eco-friendly disposition practices with the Sikh faith can be a meaningful way to honor a person who was fond of the environment and nature.

Resources on Body Care and Disposition Practices:

- [Sikh Funeral Guide | CPJ Field](#)
- [Sikh Funerals](#)
- [What happens at a Sikh funeral?](#)
- Human Composting and Water Cremation
 - [Our Model | Recompose](#)
 - [Human Composting: How it Works and Where It's Legal](#)
 - [Alkaline Hydrolysis - Cremation Association of North America \(CANA\)](#)
 - [Water Cremation \(Aquamation\): The Complete Guide to Alkaline Hydrolysis - US Funerals Online](#)

Sikh Funerals

Funeral Arrangements

Sikh funerals have a very flexible and adjustable style which allows the family to hold a funeral best suited to their needs and circumstances. Before the funeral service, the body is usually moved to the family home so that certain prayers can be recited over it. This ceremony usually lasts around 20 - 30 minutes and can be led by a religious leader like a granthi or a member of the family. Afterwards, the body is transported to the gurdwara, where the funeral is held.

At the funeral, flowers are discouraged because the ceremony is supposed to reflect simplicity and modesty. The service is very short, typically only lasting around 20 minutes. More prayers are recited and respects might be paid to the deceased. Some prayers that may be included are a community prayer known as “Ardas” and two other daily prayers called “Japji” and “Kirtan Sohila”. The ceremony is very religious and therefore expressions of grief and sorrow and rituals like long eulogies are discouraged.

After the service, the body is again transported to the crematorium where the Sohila- a specific prayer said at nighttime- is recited. The prayer indicates the final resting of the deceased and asks Waheguru to release them from the cycle of saṃsāra.

Funeral Attire

Unless the family states otherwise, guests can expect to dress modestly in white. All people who enter the gurdwara are expected to cover their hair. Guests may be asked to remove their shoes before entering the gurdwara or home where the funeral is being held. They will also be asked to wash their hands before entering the gurdwara.

Resources on Sikh Funerals:

- [Sikh Funerals](#)
- [Sikh Funeral Guide | CPJ Field](#)
- [Sikh Funerals | Sikh Cremation](#)

Sikh Mourning Period and Grief

There are no specific guidelines for how Sikhs should grieve and therefore it is important to cater to the needs and unique circumstances for each family. Some may want to be surrounded by family and loved ones while others might prefer private meditation and spiritual reflection. While there is no right or wrong way for Sikhs to mourn their dead, Sikh religion has some traditions that are intended to support the mourners in their time of grief.

After the funeral ends, the family and friends of the deceased may gather in a family home to read Sikh holy scripture, the Sri Guru Sahib. The reading of this text is called the “Akhand Path” and the text is read in a single sitting, usually over the course of three days. Sometimes the period is extended for up to ten days. Upon the completion of reciting the text, the family might return to the gurdwara for a vegetarian feast. Bringing food to the family during their mourning is a kind gesture, but keep in mind that the food must be vegetarian.

On the first anniversary of the death, the family might hold a celebration in which they gather the community to pray, eat, and celebrate the life of their loved one. At this gathering the Barsi prayer is recited which honors the deceased.

To express condolences for the family, phone calls and visits are appropriate. Some families may wish to receive flowers while others will not, so checking before ordering flowers is a good idea. Empathic gestures, small acts of kindness, and a willingness to listen are all ways in which people can express support for a grieving family.

Resources on Sikh Grieving and Mourning:

- [Akhand Path After a Death: Sikh Scripture Reading, Timing, and What It | Funeral.com, Inc.](#)
- [Sikh Funerals | Paul Williams Independent Funeral Directors](#)
- [Understanding the Sikh Tradition of Akhand Path: A Ritual for Processing Grief - TalkDeath](#)

Complete List of Online Resources

Home Funeral Alliance

- [Home Funeral Alliance](https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/) - <https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/>
- State Laws:
 - [Home Funeral Alliance State Laws](#)

Resources For Sikh Theology on Death:

- [What Is Sikh Cremation? Understanding the Traditions and Beliefs](#)
- [Understanding Death in Sikhism's Core Beliefs](#)
- [Sikhism - Death, dying and grief | Child Bereavement UK](#)

Resources on How to Prepare for the Death of a Sikh and Provide Spiritual Comfort:

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- [End of Life Reference Guide – Sikh Dharma International](#)
- [Sikhism: Final Rites](#)

Resources on Body Care and Disposition Practices:

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- [Sikh Funerals](#)
- [What happens at a Sikh funeral?](#)
- Human Composting and Water Cremation
 - [Our Model | Recompose](#)
 - [Human Composting: How it Works and Where It's Legal](#)
 - [Alkaline Hydrolysis - Cremation Association of North America \(CANA\)](#)
 - [Water Cremation \(Aquamation\): The Complete Guide to Alkaline Hydrolysis - US Funerals Online](#)

Resources on Sikh Funerals:

- [Sikh Funerals](#)
- [Sikh Funeral Guide | CPJ Field](#)
- [Sikh Funerals | Sikh Cremation](#)

Resources on Sikh Grieving and Mourning:

- [Akhand Path After a Death: Sikh Scripture Reading, Timing, and What It | Funeral.com, Inc.](#)
- [Sikh Funerals | Paul Williams Independent Funeral Directors](#)
- [Understanding the Sikh Tradition of Akhand Path: A Ritual for Processing Grief - TalkDeath](#)

Christian Deathcare



CHRISTIAN FUNERALS AND DEATH CARE

CHRISTIAN DEATH CARE

Christian death care in America is diverse and depends on geographic location, denomination, and cultural factors. Working with a local pastor or religious chaplain can be helpful to determine what kind of death care is best for the family and community.

PREPARING FOR DEATH

Many Christians prepare for death by reflecting on their personal faith and relationship with God. They might recite prayers, read scripture, and share their feelings with close family members, friends, and their religious community.

CARING FOR THE BODY

Historically, Christians opt to bury their dead, but other methods of disposition like cremation, human composting, and eco-friendly burials are also appropriate. Caring for the body in a family home dates back to the ancient Christian tradition.

FUNERALS AND MEMORIALS

The funeral serves the purpose of guiding the soul of the deceased to heaven and to provide support for the family. Funeral practices usually center around faith in God and remembrance of the person's life and include prayers, hymns, and eulogies.

MOURNING AND GRIEF

Many Christians take comfort knowing that their loved ones are with God after death, however, the process of grieving can be very difficult. Some communities might hold a reception after the funeral to allow the mourners more time to grieve as a community.



Christian Deathcare and Funeral Guidebook

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Christian Death Care Guidebook Overview

As in the case of all religions and belief systems, death holds a great deal of significance in Christianity and is practiced diversely in the United States. Ways to care for and honor the dead depend on family traditions, individual religious beliefs, and situational circumstances. It is important that those who are practicing Christian death care feel empowered to hold a funeral that reflects the wishes of the deceased and the family. Death care is highly personal and individualistic within Christianity, and the diversity of the traditions are apparent in community death practices. It can be helpful to consult a local minister, pastor, or religious chaplain who can help connect those close to death and their families to resources for Christians experiencing loss. A religious professional or funeral director can also help the family determine what kinds of personal elements they would like to include or not include in a funeral.

This guide is intended to be an overview of potential options and resources to help Christians prepare for death, care for the body, plan a funeral, and process their grief and mourning. It is not comprehensive and is not intended to be followed exactly. Please feel free to take any parts that feel meaningful and helpful and leave behind those that do not serve you. The process of death can be an overwhelming and difficult time, and this guide is one resource intended to help people navigate it. For more information on how to hold an independent or home funeral, please visit the Home Funeral Alliance at [Home Funeral Alliance](https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/), <https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/>.

Christianity and Beliefs Surrounding Death

Christians believe that death is not the end of existence, but is rather a transition in which the soul goes to be reunited with God. The belief in Jesus is a critical aspect of Christianity which separates it from other Abrahamic religions like Judaism. The core of their belief lies in accepting Jesus as their savior and acknowledging that he died for their sins, allowing humans to be redeemed in the sight of God. Christians hope that after death, their soul will go to heaven to be with God. The acceptance of Jesus as one's savior is necessary in order to enter the celestial kingdom of God. Christians believe that in heaven, there is no suffering or pain, and that they will be reunited with their loved ones who have also passed on. This can be achieved by living life on earth as a good Christian and honoring certain traditions that are believed to assure a peaceful afterlife. Certain rituals like baptism, confirmation, confession, communion, marriage, and funeral rites are all meant to encourage a person to live a more Christian life which will help them to secure a spot in heaven.

Another important part of Christian theology around death is the belief in resurrection. According to the Christian text the Book of Revelation, a day of judgement will come, when all the souls who have died will be resurrected. They will be judged based on their lives and how well they upheld Christian values. God will then determine whether or not they will go on to enjoy an eternal afterlife in his kingdom. Because of this, some Christians feel strongly about how the body should be cared for leading up to, and after death. However, Christianity is an incredibly diverse religion with many different denominations, which is reflected in how they care for their dead.

Resources For Christian Theology on Death:

- [Life after death - Christianity](#)
- [Where Do Christians Go When They Die?](#)
- [What Happens When You Die?](#)

Preparing For Death

Because of the diversity of Christian faiths, how an individual should prepare for death is dependent on many factors like denomination, geographic region, family tradition, and personal belief system. If a person has a relationship with a local church, reaching out to their leadership team or pastor may be a good way to support someone nearing the end of their life. A religious leader will be able to help the dying and their family determine what kinds of Christian traditions they would like to honor and they will be able to facilitate any last rites that might be appropriate.

The Protestant tradition usually comforts the dying by reciting prayers at the bedside, anointing the person, and performing a communion. Catholics have a special ritual called the “last rites” or “sacrament of the sick” that is done by a Catholic priest at the end of life. Contact a Catholic church and ask for a priest who can help conduct and perform these ceremonies for a loved one. There are many prayers and hymns which center death and may bring comfort to the dying. Reading the Holy Bible and reflecting on specific passages on death, suffering, and the promise of an afterlife are also ways that families may choose to care for their dying.

Simply gathering close family and loved ones is a good way to support Christians who are facing death. They may wish to express regrets, important memories, fears, hopes, and gratitude when reflecting on their life and on death. It may be helpful to encourage them to focus on their relationship with God and Jesus and to reflect on their personal spirituality. Providing a listening ear and maintaining empathy are often the most meaningful ways to comfort someone facing death, regardless of their specific beliefs.

Resources on How to Prepare for the Death of a Christian and Provide Spiritual Comfort:

- [Christianity & End-of-Life Care](#)
- [Living like We're Dying: How Christians Can Prepare for Death | Elizabeth Turnage](#)

Caring for the Body

Following the Death

After the moment of death, a close family member may close the eyes and mouth of the deceased. Loved ones may want to sit with the body to say prayers, final goodbyes, and to grieve their passing. Often, Christians will wish to make arrangements with a funeral home before the passing. If this is the case, the funeral director can be contacted so that they can arrange for transport of the body. Once the body is transported to the funeral home, they will usually assume full responsibility over the body, and will prepare it before the funeral.

Some families may prefer to care for the body themselves and keep it in a family home until the funeral. This is becoming increasingly normalized and actually dates back to ancient Christian methods of caring for the dead. In the ancient Mediterranean, the family of the deceased would care for the body as a final act of love and kindness. It is also believed that caring for loved ones who have died helps those who are living to process and mourn the loss. If the family wishes to care for the body independently, they may want to make a transport plan ahead of time. For more information about how to care for the body in a private residence consult the Home Funeral Alliance Guidebook which can be accessed at [Home Funeral Alliance](https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/), <https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/>.

Burials, Cremations, and Other Options

Historically, Christians have chosen to bury their dead rather than cremate them. This is due to the belief in resurrection which requires the existence of a physical body in order for it to take place. Because Christian funerals sometimes don't happen immediately following the death, if the deceased is going to be buried, they are usually embalmed. Embalming is done at a funeral home. Embalming also allows the family and funeral guests to have a viewing of the body if they choose.

In modern times, many Christians wish to be cremated. Cremation is accepted in many Christian churches and allows the family to memorialize the ashes in an urn or other vessel if they wish. There are now many options similar to cremation that Christians may prefer, such as human composting and water cremation. Human composting and water cremation allow the body of the deceased to be converted into nutrient rich fertilizer. The fertilizer can then be used to grow trees, plants, and gardens or donated to conservation projects. For more information on how to hold Christian funerals that are environmentally friendly, consult the resources below on human composting and water cremation.

Environmentally Friendly Funeral Practices and Green Burials

If Christians are interested in burial practices that are more environmentally friendly, green or natural burials might be a good option. Many Christians believe that having a natural burial, which allows for the body to naturally decompose and be returned to the earth, is a more Christ-like option, allowing people to enact stewardship over the land. While the body cannot be embalmed for natural burials, there are many ways the body can be preserved until after the funeral. For more information on how to hold Christian funerals that are environmentally friendly, consult the resources below on “green burials”. Combining green burial practices with the beliefs held by Christians can be a meaningful way to honor a person who was fond of the environment and nature.

Resources on Body Care and Burial Practices:

- [Have Christians forgotten how to care for the dead? - U.S. Catholic](#)
- [How Should Christians Bury Their Dead?](#)
- [Should Christians Cremate Their Loved Ones? | Desiring God](#)
- Green Burials
 - [Green burial as an act of faith | The Christian Century](#)
 - [Comparing Natural Burial Traditions Across Different Religions - Serenity Ridge](#)
 - [The church forbids ‘human composting’ at death. But what about ‘green’ burials? - America Magazine](#)
 - [Plan a Green Burial | Step-by-Step Eco Funeral Planning](#)
- Human Composting and Water Cremation
 - [Our Model | Recompose](#)
 - [Human Composting: How it Works and Where It's Legal](#)
 - [Alkaline Hydrolysis - Cremation Association of North America \(CANA\)](#)
 - [Water Cremation \(Aquamation\): The Complete Guide to Alkaline Hydrolysis - US Funerals Online](#)

Christian Funerals

Funeral Arrangements and Attire

Christian funerals range in their formality, from very casual to extremely official. The kind of funeral depends on the wishes of the deceased, the preference of the family, and the individual circumstances of the situation. Funerals can be held at a church, family home, somewhere in nature, at a funeral home, or graveside. Choosing to have a funeral in a family home honors the ancient tradition of how historic Christians have honored their dead. Finding a funeral home that honors the family's wishes to care for their own dead while providing logistical support around cremation, burials, and transport can be helpful.

Some families might hold a pre-funeral vigil to provide an opportunity for close family and friends to spend time together and grieve the loss before the funeral. They may read poems, share stories, and sing songs. If there is a body viewing, it often happens during this vigil and may be reserved for those who were closest to the deceased.

The funeral serves the purpose of guiding the soul of the deceased to heaven and to provide support for the family. Rituals and funeral practices usually center around faith in God and remembrance of the person's life. The funeral is typically led by a pastor or minister but can also be led by a family member. Immediate family and close friends might share eulogies, stories, and expressions of grief to the congregation. Usually the service will include hymns, prayers, and music. The music might be religiously inspired or songs that are chosen in remembrance of the person who has passed. The body may be present at the service, or not.

Unless the family states otherwise, guests can expect to dress modestly in dark colors like black, navy, and dark blue. Most families accept and appreciate flowers being sent to honor the dead. Other gestures such as cards and donations to charities are thoughtful as well.

Burial Proceedings

If the body is to be buried, after the funeral, it will be transported to the chosen site and the rest of the congregation will gather there. At a cemetery or burial ground, someone may lead another series of prayers or say some final words in remembrance of the person. Then, the body is lowered into the grave in a casket or coffin unless it is a green burial. A pastor or minister might perform what is called the “rite of committal” which is a final religious offering of peace, comfort, and hope and a promise of eternal life. Some mourners might wish to sprinkle some soil into the grave as a final goodbye.

Alternative Options Post-Funeral

If the body is being cremated, (or something similar), it will be transferred to the facility after the funeral. The ashes will be returned to the family who may wish to memorialize them in an urn or scatter them somewhere that was meaningful to the person.

Resources on Christian Funerals:

- [Christianity & End-of-Life Care](#)
- [What are Christian funeral rites](#)
- [Have Christians forgotten how to care for the dead? - U.S. Catholic](#)
- [RITE OF COMMITTAL \(Graveside\)](#)
- [Christian Funeral Hymns](#)

Christian Mourning Period and Grief

The way Christian families and communities chose to grieve is extremely personal and should be tailored to best serve their individual needs. Some may want to be surrounded by family and loved ones while others might prefer private meditation and spiritual reflection. While there is no right or wrong way for Christians to mourn their dead, Christian religion has some traditions that are intended to support the mourners in their time of grief.

After the funeral ends, some mourners might want to hold a reception or wake to continue grieving in community by gathering in a private residence or home. There, they may read scripture together, pray, and share memories of the deceased. There will often be food and drink at the gathering. The community usually supports the immediate family in mourning by cooking meals or bringing food, helping with childcare, performing daily tasks like cleaning, and offering to listen and be a source of comfort.

Christians do grieve the loss of a loved one, but often find comfort in the hope that they are with God. Although their physical body is no longer on Earth, Christians believe that their soul lives on and is often present with their living family members. It is okay during the mourning process to feel both sorrow and hope. Expressing difficult feelings are helpful in processing the complexity of losing a loved one.

To express condolences for the family, phone calls, visits, flowers, food, and cards are appropriate. Empathic gestures, small acts of kindness, and a willingness to listen are all ways in which people can express support for a grieving family.

Resources on Christian Grieving and Mourning:

- [How to Grieve as a Christian](#)
- [Learning How to Grieve | The Village Church](#)
- [How do I grieve as a Christian? - TheCatholicSpirit.com](#)

Special Orthodox Considerations

Greek Orthodox

Funerary practices that are specific to the Greek Orthodox tradition mostly occur during the actual funeral service. The special rites will be led by a priest. The first ritual which marks the beginning of the funeral service is called the Trisagion Service. This translates to “Thrice-Holy” service and consists of four particular hymns which are chanted by the entire congregation of mourners. The hymns are a request that ask for the deceased to find rest. The final chant says, “may your memory be eternal”.

After the Trisagion Service, the congregation will chant the first three stanzas of Psalm 119, before moving into the Evlogetaria (Εὐλογητάρια), or the hymns of praise. Then, the priest will lead the Kontakion and Hymns of the Eight Tones. The lyrics of the Kontakion follow: “Give rest, O Christ, among the Saints to the soul of Your servant, where there is no pain, no sorrow, no grieving, but life everlasting”.

There are two traditional selections of scripture read. One is from 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 and the other one is from John 5:24-30. The priest will offer a final prayer and blessing before inviting up the entire congregation to say a final goodbye to the deceased. Sometimes called the final kiss, the congregants might offer a kiss of the forehead or hand of the deceased. The priest will anoint the dead with oils before the casket is moved to the place of burial.

It is also typical in the Greek Orthodox tradition that a memorial service is held forty days after the death. Sometimes, there is a second memorial held a year following the passing of a loved one.

Russian Orthodox

When a person is nearing death, the local priest of a Russian Orthodox church should be contacted. If the person has a terminal illness, the priest will offer them the mystery of the Holy Unction at their bedside. After the death of a person in the Russian Orthodox church, the priest will come to serve the first panakhida or memorial service. This is done in the place where the person has died. The Russian Orthodoxy tradition requires that members of their church be buried. Both cremation and embalming are practices which are not typically allowed in Russian Orthodoxy.

Eastern Orthodox

After a member of the Eastern Orthodox church has died, the priest will come to the place of death and perform the first panakhida (memorial service). Eastern Orthodox funerals typically have a wake which lasts three days total. During the wake, family and friends will take turns reading from the Psalter. In the Eastern Orthodox church, cremation is prohibited, although embalming is acceptable.

At the funeral service, the priest will perform the Tragsion service (see description above in the Greek Orthodoxy section). Additionally, the casket should be placed in the front of the church and should be left open. Next to the head of the coffin, place a bowl of koliva which is a dish of honey and wheat. This represents the sweetness of Heaven. A cross may also be placed in the hand of the deceased. Typically, an Eastern Orthodox church service will have many lit candles burning throughout the service. Following the burial, there is usually a reception at the family home. A meal is prepared called the “mercy meal” and more prayers and hymns are recited. The typical mourning period lasts forty days.

Resources for Orthodox Services

- [The Funeral Service of the Orthodox Church](#)
- [A Guide to an Orthodox Christian Funeral](#)
- [Eastern Orthodox Funeral Traditions | Everplans](#)

Complete List of Online Resources

Home Funeral Alliance

- [Home Funeral Alliance](https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/) - <https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/>
- State Laws:
 - [Home Funeral Alliance State Laws](#)

Resources For Christian Theology on Death:

- [Life after death - Christianity](#)
- [Where Do Christians Go When They Die?](#)
- [What Happens When You Die?](#)

Resources on How to Prepare for the Death of a Christian and Provide Spiritual Comfort:

- [Christianity & End-of-Life Care](#)
- [Living like We're Dying: How Christians Can Prepare for Death | Elizabeth Turnage](#)

Resources on Body Care and Burial Practices:

- [Have Christians forgotten how to care for the dead? - U.S. Catholic](#)
- [How Should Christians Bury Their Dead?](#)
- [Should Christians Cremate Their Loved Ones? | Desiring God](#)
- Green Burials
 - [Green burial as an act of faith | The Christian Century](#)
 - [Comparing Natural Burial Traditions Across Different Religions - Serenity Ridge](#)
 - [The church forbids 'human composting' at death. But what about 'green' burials? - America Magazine](#)
 - [Plan a Green Burial | Step-by-Step Eco Funeral Planning](#)
- Human Composting and Water Cremation
 - [Our Model | Recompose](#)
 - [Human Composting: How it Works and Where It's Legal](#)
 - [Alkaline Hydrolysis - Cremation Association of North America \(CANA\)](#)
 - [Water Cremation \(Aquamation\): The Complete Guide to Alkaline Hydrolysis - US Funerals Online](#)

Resources on Christian Funerals:

- [Christianity & End-of-Life Care](#)
- [What are Christian funeral rites](#)
- [Have Christians forgotten how to care for the dead? - U.S. Catholic](#)
- [RITE OF COMMITTAL \(Graveside\)](#)
- [Christian Funeral Hymns](#)

Resources on Christian Grieving and Mourning:

- [How to Grieve as a Christian](#)
- [Learning How to Grieve | The Village Church](#)
- [How do I grieve as a Christian? - TheCatholicSpirit.com](#)

Resources for Orthodox Services

- [The Funeral Service of the Orthodox Church](#)
- [A Guide to an Orthodox Christian Funeral](#)
- [Eastern Orthodox Funeral Traditions | Everplans](#)

Catholic Deathcare



CATHOLIC DEATH CARE

CATHOLIC DEATH CARE

Catholic death care is usually aligned with the traditions of the church. A local priest or deacon will be able help plan a Catholic funeral that honors the wishes of the dead and the family in mourning.

PREPARING FOR DEATH

When a person is nearing death, it is a good idea to call a priest. They will perform “last rites”, daily communion, and special blessings for the person who is dying.

CARING FOR THE BODY

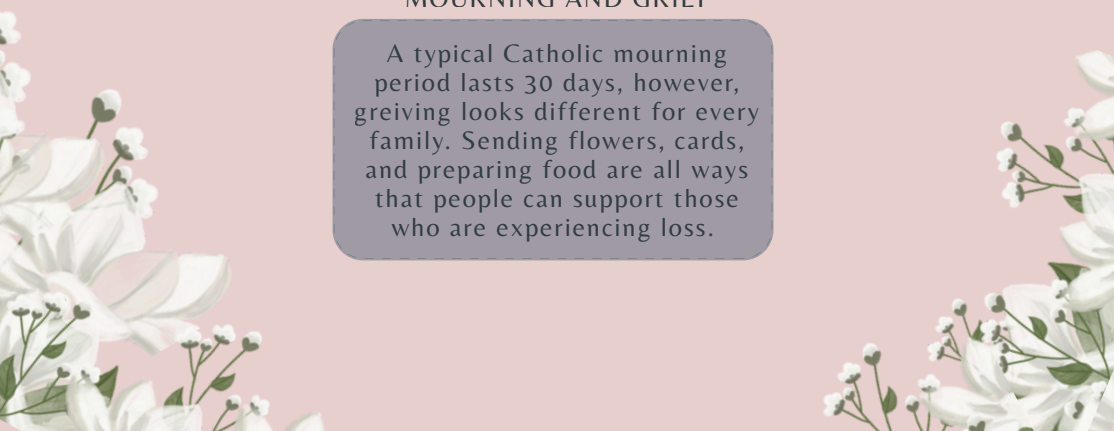
Most Catholic funerals have a vigil before the service which allows for the family to mourn the loss privately. The Catholic tradition has a strong preference for burial, however, cremation is also acceptable in many churches.

FUNERALS

A Catholic funeral takes the form of Mass, and is conducted by a priest or deacon. They will usually read scripture, sing hymns, hold Holy Communion, and give special blessings to the dead.

MOURNING AND GRIEF

A typical Catholic mourning period lasts 30 days, however, grieving looks different for every family. Sending flowers, cards, and preparing food are all ways that people can support those who are experiencing loss.



Catholic Deathcare and Funeral Guidebook

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Catholic Death Care Guidebook Overview

As in the case of all religions and belief systems, death holds a great deal of significance in Catholicism and is practiced diversely in the United States. Ways to care for and honor the dead depend on family traditions, individual religious beliefs, and situational circumstances. It is important that those who are practicing Catholic death care feel empowered to hold a funeral that reflects the wishes of the deceased and the family. Death care is very personal within Catholicism, and the diversity of the traditions are apparent in community death practices. It can be helpful to consult a local priest or deacon who can connect those close to death and their families to resources for Catholics experiencing loss. A religious professional or funeral director can also help the family determine what kinds of personal elements they would like to include or not include in a funeral.

This guide is intended to be an overview of potential options and resources to help Catholics prepare for death, care for the body, plan a funeral, and process their grief and mourning. It is not comprehensive and is not intended to be followed exactly. Please feel free to take any parts that feel meaningful and helpful and leave behind those that do not serve you. The process of death can be an overwhelming and difficult time, and this guide is one resource intended to help people navigate it.

For more information on how to hold an independent or home funeral, please visit the Home Funeral Alliance at [Home Funeral Alliance](https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/), <https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/>.

Catholicism and Beliefs Surrounding Death

Catholics believe that death is not the end of existence, but is rather a transition in which the eternal soul goes to be reunited with God. After death, it is believed that the soul is judged immediately. If the soul is clean of sin, it will be sent on to pass through the gates of heaven. The belief in Jesus is a critical aspect of Catholicism which separates it from other Abrahamic religions like Judaism. The core of their belief lies in accepting Jesus as their savior and acknowledging that he died for their sins, allowing humans to be redeemed in the sight of God. Because of this belief, it is important that Catholics are baptized after they are born, and confirmed later in life.

Catholics hope that after death, their soul will go to heaven to dwell in their eternal home with God. The acceptance of Jesus as one's savior is necessary in order to enter the celestial kingdom of God. Catholics believe that in heaven, there is no suffering or pain, and that they will be reunited with their loved ones who have also passed on. This can be achieved by living life on earth as a good Catholic and honoring certain traditions that are believed to assure a peaceful afterlife. Specific rituals like baptism, confirmation, confession, communion, marriage, and funeral rites are all meant to encourage a person to live a more Christian life which will help them to secure a spot in heaven.

Another important part of Catholic theology around death is the belief in resurrection. According to the Christian text the Book of Revelation, a day of judgement will come, when all the souls who have died will be resurrected. The souls will be reunited with their early bodies, deeming it important for physical remains to be preserved through burial. They will be judged based on their lives and how well they upheld Christian values. God will then determine whether or not they will go on to enjoy an eternal afterlife in his kingdom. Because of this, Catholics feel strongly about how the body should be cared for leading up to, and after death.

Resources For Catholic Theology on Death:

- [What Happens to Our Bodies Immediately after We Die? | Catholic Answers Q&A](#)
- [What the Church Says About Death | Catholic Teaching | Art of Dying Well](#)
- [Where Do Christians Go When They Die? | Desiring God](#)
- [What Happens When You Die? | Cru](#)

Preparing For Death

The rituals that take place before the death of a Catholic are determined by the sacred rituals of the Catholic church. The priest or deacon of the dying person's local church should be contacted, as they will be able to help the dying and their family determine what kinds of traditions they would like to honor. A priest or deacon will also be able to facilitate any last rites that might be appropriate. When it becomes obvious that a loved one is getting close to the end of their life, the family may wish to reach out to the local parish to share the somber news. The parish will usually publish the information in the weekly bulletin or make an announcement at Sunday service so that the congregation is able to pray for them and their family.

A general tradition that is observed by Catholics and Christians alike, comforts the dying by reciting prayers at the bedside, anointing the person, and performing a communion. Catholics have a special ritual called the “last rites” or “sacrament of reconciliation” that is done by a Catholic priest at the end of life. This blessing provides ultimate forgiveness and absolution to the dying person for any sins they have committed during their life. It is a kind of confession that concludes with the priest asking God to let the person into his eternal kingdom of heaven. The local parish priest will be available to come to wherever the dying person is to perform these rituals. They may continue to help the dying participate in communion as long as the person is able to swallow. The final communion is called the viaticum which affirms the person’s commitment to their faith and God, as well as provides the dying with sustenance as they begin their journey to the afterlife.

There are many prayers and hymns which center death and may bring comfort to the dying. Reading the Holy Bible and reflecting on specific passages on death, suffering, and the promise of an afterlife are also ways that families may choose to care for their dying. There are also many hymns that are traditionally sung throughout the experience of death, that are intended to bring those who are struggling some comfort.

Sometimes, a person will have specific wishes about how they want their funeral to be conducted. When they are nearing the end of their lives, it can be a good time to ask them about if they want any particular songs played or hymns sung, what they would like to be done with their body, and if they have any other special requests.

Gathering close family and loved ones is a good way to support Catholics who are facing death. A person who is dying may wish to express regrets, important memories, fears, hopes, and gratitude when reflecting on their life and on death. It may be helpful to encourage them to focus on their relationship with God and Jesus and to reflect on their personal spirituality. The local priest may be helpful in guiding a person through their emotional journey as they get closer to death. Providing a listening ear and maintaining empathy are often the most meaningful ways to comfort someone facing death.

Resources on How to Prepare for the Death of a Catholic and Provide Spiritual Comfort:

- [Doula's Guide to Catholic Rituals at End of Life](#)
- [CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA: Preparation for Death](#)
- [A good Catholic death](#)
- [Christianity & End-of-Life Care](#)
- [Living like We're Dying: How Christians Can Prepare for Death | Elizabeth Turnage](#)

Caring for the Body

Following the Death

After the moment of death, a close family member may close the eyes and mouth of the deceased. Loved ones may want to sit with the body to say prayers, final goodbyes, and to grieve their passing. If the priest is present, they may give the person a special blessing upon death.

If the body is to be transported to a funeral home, the funeral director can be contacted so that they can arrange for transport of the body. Once the body is transported to the funeral home, they will usually assume full responsibility over the body, and will prepare it before the funeral.

Some families may prefer to care for the body themselves and keep it in a family home until the funeral. Although still a smaller trend within Catholic communities, this is becoming an increasingly normalized practice and actually dates back to ancient Christian methods of caring for the dead. In the ancient Mediterranean, the family of the deceased would care for the body as a final act of love and kindness. It is also believed that caring for loved ones who have died helps those who are living to process and mourn the loss. If the family wishes to care for the body independently, they may want to make a transport plan ahead of time. For more information about how to care for the body in a private residence consult the Home Funeral Alliance Guidebook which can be accessed at [Home Funeral Alliance](https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/), <https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/>.

Burials, Cremations, and Other Options

Historically, Christians have chosen to bury their dead rather than cremate them. This is due to the belief in resurrection which requires the existence of physical remains in order for it to take place. While there are many existing Catholic cemeteries, it is not necessary for the burial site to be one. Through a process called interment, a priest can bless any ground in which the body is to be buried. It is important however, that a Catholic chooses a cemetery that offers burial plots which are permanent, rather than successive (reused every 50-60 years after the body has had time to fully decompose). The grave should be clearly marked with the name of the deceased person, so that family and friends may visit the gravesite to pray for them.

Because Christian funerals sometimes don't happen immediately following the death, if the deceased is going to be buried, they are usually embalmed. Embalming is done at a funeral home. Embalming also allows the family and funeral guests to have a viewing of the body if they choose.

While there is a strong preference for burial in the Catholic church, cremation is also an acceptable option. The cremated remains are still expected to be buried so that the family has a physical place to come pray for their deceased loved ones.

Environmentally Friendly Funeral Practices, Green Burials, and Donation

If Catholics are interested in burial practices that are more environmentally friendly, green or natural burials might be a good option. Many Christians believe that having a natural burial, which allows for the body to naturally decompose and be returned to the earth, is a more Christ-like option, allowing people to enact stewardship over the land. The body should still be placed in a wooden casket as opposed to a shroud which will eventually decompose. While the body cannot be embalmed for natural burials, there are many ways the body can be preserved until after the funeral. For more information on how to hold Catholic funerals that are environmentally friendly, consult the resources below on “green burials”. Combining green burial practices with the beliefs held by Catholics can be a meaningful way to honor a person who was fond of the environment and nature. Catholicism also supports the decision to donate the body to science if it is the wish of the deceased.

Resources on Body Care and Burial Practices:

- [Have Christians forgotten how to care for the dead? - U.S. Catholic](#)
- [A Practical Guide to Death for Catholics | Franciscan Media](#)
- [How Should Christians Bury Their Dead?](#)
- [Should Christians Cremate Their Loved Ones? | Desiring God](#)
- Green Burials
 - [Green burial as an act of faith | The Christian Century](#)
 - [Comparing Natural Burial Traditions Across Different Religions - Serenity Ridge](#)
 - [The church forbids ‘human composting’ at death. But what about ‘green’ burials? - America Magazine](#)
 - [Plan a Green Burial | Step-by-Step Eco Funeral Planning](#)

Catholic Funerals

Funeral Arrangements and Attire

Catholic funerals tend to be fairly formal and run according to official church proceedings. Specific elements of the funeral may depend on the wishes of the deceased, the preference of the family, and the individual circumstances of the situation. Funerals can be held at a church, family home, somewhere in nature, at a funeral home, or graveside. Choosing to have a funeral in a family home honors the ancient tradition of how historic Christians have honored their dead. Finding a funeral home that honors the family's wishes to care for their own dead while providing logistical support around cremation, burials, and transport can be helpful.

Some families might hold a pre-funeral vigil to provide an opportunity for close family and friends to spend time together and grieve the loss before the funeral. They may read poems, share stories, and sing songs. If there is a body viewing, it often happens during this vigil and may be reserved for those who were closest to the deceased.

The funeral serves the purpose of guiding the soul of the deceased to heaven and to provide support for the family. Rituals and funeral practices usually center around faith in God and remembrance of the person's life. Pallbearers, who are usually close friends and family of the deceased, will bring the casket into the church. They will be greeted by the priest who will sprinkle holy water on the casket and bless the deceased as they enter. A table of remembrance might be put up near the casket with a photo of the deceased and other tokens of remembrance.

The funeral service will be led by the priest or deacon of the church. Usually the service will include hymns, prayers, and music. The mourners will collectively pray for the deceased and send blessings that God has mercy on their soul. After the liturgy of the word (a reading of the Old Testament, Psalms, the New Testament, and the Gospels), the priest will give a homily which reflects on the meaning of those readings in relation to the person who has died. Then, the mourners will partake in Communion, or Liturgy of the Eucharist. Following the Holy Communion, families will read any eulogies they prepared, and the priest will give a final commendation before the burial.

Unless the family states otherwise, guests can expect to dress modestly in dark colors like black, navy, and dark blue. Most families accept and appreciate flowers being sent to honor the dead, and will display them at the funeral service. Other gestures such as cards and donations to charities are thoughtful as well.

Burial Proceedings

After the funeral, the body will be transported to the chosen site and the rest of the congregation will gather there. At a cemetery or burial ground, the priest or deacon may lead another series of prayers or say some final words in remembrance of the person. They will perform what is called the “rite of committal” which is a final religious offering of peace, comfort, and hope and a promise of eternal life. The blessing will help the soul transition to be with God, and asks that any sins be forgiven. Usually, some holy water is sprinkled on the casket. Immediate family and close friends might share eulogies, stories, and expressions of grief to the congregation. Then, the body is lowered into the grave in a casket or coffin unless it is a green burial. Some mourners might wish to sprinkle some soil into the grave as a final goodbye.

Alternative Options Post-Funeral

If the body is being cremated, it will be transferred to the crematorium after the funeral. The ashes will be returned to the family who will then bury them in a designated place.

Resources on Catholic Funerals:

- [What Happens at a Catholic Funeral? Complete Guide | Art of Dying Well](#)
- [Christianity & End-of-Life Care](#)
- [What are Christian funeral rites](#)
- [Have Christians forgotten how to care for the dead? - U.S. Catholic](#)
- [RITE OF COMMITTAL \(Graveside\)](#)
- [Christian Funeral Hymns](#)

Catholic Mourning Period and Grief

The way Catholic families and communities chose to grieve is extremely personal and should be tailored to best serve their individual needs. Some may want to be surrounded by family and loved ones while others might prefer space for private prayer and spiritual reflection. While there is no right or wrong way for Catholics to mourn their dead, the religion has some traditions that are intended to support the mourners in their time of grief.

The typical mourning period for Catholics is a period of thirty days following the death of a person. Close family members may observe certain mourning rituals for up to a year. Regularly attending Mass and connecting with other Catholic community members are often important aspects of the period of grief.

After the funeral ends, some mourners might want to hold a reception or wake to continue grieving in community by gathering in a private residence or home. There, they may read scripture together, pray, and share memories of the deceased. There will often be food and drink at the gathering. The community usually supports the immediate family in mourning by cooking meals or bringing food, helping with childcare, performing daily tasks like cleaning, and offering to listen and be a source of comfort.

Catholics grieve the loss of a loved one, but often find comfort in the hope that they are with God. Although their physical body is no longer on Earth, they believe that their soul lives on and is often present with their living family members. It is okay during the mourning process to feel both sorrow and hope. Expressing difficult feelings are helpful in processing the complexity of losing a loved one.

To express condolences for the family, phone calls, visits, flowers, food, and cards are appropriate. Empathic gestures, small acts of kindness, and a willingness to listen are all ways in which people can express support for a grieving family.

Resources on Catholic Grieving and Mourning:

- [Catholicism: Periods of Mourning](#)
- [Here is a Catholic Guide to Understanding Grief](#)
- [How to Grieve as a Christian](#)
- [Learning How to Grieve | The Village Church](#)
- [How do I grieve as a Christian? - TheCatholicSpirit.com](#)

Complete List of Online Resources

Home Funeral Alliance

- <https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/>
- State Laws:
 - <https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/state-laws>

Resources For Catholic Theology on Death:

- [What Happens to Our Bodies Immediately after We Die? | Catholic Answers Q&A](#)
- [What the Church Says About Death | Catholic Teaching | Art of Dying Well](#)
- [Where Do Christians Go When They Die? | Desiring God](#)
- [What Happens When You Die? | Cru](#)

Resources on How to Prepare for the Death of a Catholic and Provide Spiritual Comfort:

- [Doula's Guide to Catholic Rituals at End of Life](#)
- [CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA: Preparation for Death](#)
- [A good Catholic death](#)
- [Christianity & End-of-Life Care](#)
- [Living like We're Dying: How Christians Can Prepare for Death | Elizabeth Turnage](#)

Resources on Body Care and Burial Practices:

- [Have Christians forgotten how to care for the dead? - U.S. Catholic](#)
- [A Practical Guide to Death for Catholics | Franciscan Media](#)
- [How Should Christians Bury Their Dead?](#)
- [Should Christians Cremate Their Loved Ones? | Desiring God](#)
- Green Burials
 - [Green burial as an act of faith | The Christian Century](#)
 - [Comparing Natural Burial Traditions Across Different Religions - Serenity Ridge](#)
 - [The church forbids 'human composting' at death. But what about 'green' burials? - America Magazine](#)
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- [Christian Funeral Hymns](#)

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- [Here is a Catholic Guide to Understanding Grief](#)
- [How to Grieve as a Christian](#)
- [Learning How to Grieve | The Village Church](#)
- [How do I grieve as a Christian? - TheCatholicSpirit.com](#)

Hindu Deathcare

Hindu Funerals and Death Care

Preparing for Death

When Hindus are facing death, they typically use it as an opportunity for reflection. Hindus will try to focus on the acceptance of death and their spiritual connection with Brahma. They may do this by reciting certain prayers, mantras, or studying specific teachings presented in Hindu scripture.

Caring for the Body

The family performs a ritual cleansing of the body by washing it with ghee, honey, and yogurt before using soap and water. Most Hindus prefer to be cremated. There are many different kinds of environmentally friendly cremations, such as water cremations and human composting.

Hindu Funerals

The body will be transported to the crematorium, chapel, or wherever the funeral is to be held. They might chant texts like Bhagavad Gita or hymns like Om Namah Shivaya. At the crematorium, the body is viewed by the mourners in a respectful manner, and offerings such as rice, ghee, flowers, and incense are sometimes made.

Grieving and Mourning

On the tenth day of the mourning period, a ceremony called the Shraddhah is held to help the soul transition from one life to the next. On the first anniversary of the death, the family might gather the community to pray, eat, and celebrate the life of their loved one.

Hindu Deathcare and Funeral Guidebook

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Hindu Death Care Guidebook Overview

As in the case of all religions and belief systems, death holds a great deal of significance in Hinduism and is practiced diversely in the United States. Ways to care for and honor the dead depend on family traditions, individual religious beliefs, and situational circumstances. It is important that those who are practicing Hindu death care feel empowered to hold a funeral that reflects the wishes of the deceased and the family. Death care is highly personal and individualistic within Hinduism, and the diversity of the traditions are apparent in community death practices. It can be helpful to consult a Hindu priest or religious chaplain who can help connect those close to death and their families to resources for Hindus experiencing loss. A religious professional or funeral director can also help the family determine what kinds of personal elements they would like to include or not include in a funeral.

This guide is intended to be an overview of potential options and resources to help Hindus prepare for death, care for the body, plan a funeral, and process their grief and mourning. It is not comprehensive and is not intended to be followed exactly. Please feel free to take any parts that feel meaningful and helpful and leave behind those that do not serve you. The process of death can be an overwhelming and difficult time, and this guide is one resource intended to help people navigate it.

For more information on how to hold an independent or home funeral, please visit the Home Funeral Alliance at [Home Funeral Alliance](https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/), <https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/>.

Hinduism and Beliefs Surrounding Death

Similarly to Buddhism and Sikhism, Hinduism teaches that death is a natural step in the cycle of life. Hinduism believes in reincarnation which follows the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. Therefore, death is not seen as an end, but as a transition period into a different life. The kind of life someone will be reborn into is determined by the karmic merit accrued in one's previous life. Hindus believe that Brahma, the Hindu God, lives within each and every being, and that part of our goal in this lifetime is to recognize that. With each life and death, Hindus believe that they get a step closer to reuniting with Brahma. Hindus will eventually be liberated from the cycle of life by living rightly and learning to be a more compassionate being. This will liberate them from the cycle of saṃsāra and allow them to attain moksha - the freedom of the soul from cycles of reincarnation.

Hindus believe that the soul is called atman which translates to "one's true self". This idea of self is different from the body or physical self as well as the ego and mind. Atman is what continues on to be reincarnated to the next life and will eventually be reunited with Brahma. Meditating on the acceptance of death and the impermanence of one's innermost self are ways that Hindus approach the theology of death.

Resources For Hindu Theology on Death:

- [5 things to know about Hindus and death](#)
- [Hinduism & End-of-Life Care](#)
- [Death - Hinduism, Reincarnation, Karma | Britannica](#)

Preparing For Death

While there are no specific rituals for how Hindus should prepare for death, their religious beliefs can help inform best practices for dealing with the transition. When Hindus are facing death, they typically use it as an opportunity for reflection. Rather than expressing grief and sorrow, they will try to focus on the acceptance of death and their spiritual connection with Brahma. They may do this by reciting certain prayers, mantras, or studying specific teachings presented in Hindu scripture. They may also reflect on their lifetime and express wishes and hopes for their next life. Spending time with a person who is dying and providing comfort, empathy, and a listening ear are good ways to support them through the transition.

Resources on How to Prepare for the Death of a Hindu and Provide Spiritual Comfort:

- [Helping People to Connect to the Divine](#)
- [Hinduism & End-of-Life Care](#)

Caring for the Body

Following the Death

When caring for Hindus who have died, families and religious professionals may perform rituals that are rooted in the qualities of simplicity, respect, and brevity. After the moment of death, a close family member may wish to close the eyes and mouth of the deceased. Hindu funeral rites take place promptly after the death, so the body typically remains in the home until then.

The family might perform a ritual cleansing of the body by washing it with ghee, honey, and yogurt before using soap and water. The cleansing is usually done by members of the same sex as the deceased and is done with the utmost care. After the cleaning, the body is then either dressed in nice clothes (a modern tradition) or wrapped in a white sheet to signify purity (traditional method). Someone may anoint the forehead of the deceased with essential oils. Typically, the big toes are tied together and the palms are placed in a prayer position. Marigolds or tulsi leaves might be placed around the body, or a lamp might be lit near the head. For more general information about how to care for the body in a private residence consult the Home Funeral Alliance Guidebook which can be accessed at [Home Funeral Alliance](https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/), <https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/>.

Because Hindu funerals typically happen within 24 hours of the death, embalming is not necessary. In the period before the funeral, guests may wish to come to the home and offer their condolences to the family.

Hindu Cremations

While there is no rule against burying a Hindu person, cremation is the preferred choice. This is because the body holds no significance in the religion other than to house the soul. It is also believed that cremation is the quickest way to facilitate reincarnation. The person may wish for their ashes to be scattered somewhere meaningful in nature such as in a river. Cremations are prompt and usually take place immediately following the funeral service.

Environmentally Friendly Disposition

Because Hindus are not usually embalmed, they are able to choose a variety of environmentally friendly disposition options. Options like human composting and water cremation allow the body of the deceased to be converted into nutrient rich fertilizer. The fertilizer can then be used to grow trees, plants, and gardens or donated to conservation projects. Organ donation and the donation of a body to science are also meaningful ways for Hindus to give to humanist causes. For more information on how to hold Hindu funerals that are environmentally friendly, consult the resources below on human composting and water cremation. Combining eco-friendly disposition practices with the Hindu faith can be a meaningful way to honor a person who was fond of the environment and nature.

Resources on Body Care and Disposition Practices:

- [Hindu Funeral Rites and Death Rituals | Funeral Partners](#)
- [Why Cremation is Preferred in Hinduism – And When Burial is Chosen Instead](#)
- [A Comprehensive Guide to Hindu Funeral Traditions](#)
- Human Composting and Water Cremation
 - [Our Model | Recompose](#)
 - [Human Composting: How it Works and Where It's Legal](#)
 - [Alkaline Hydrolysis - Cremation Association of North America \(CANA\)](#)
 - [Water Cremation \(Aquamation\): The Complete Guide to Alkaline Hydrolysis - US Funerals Online](#)

Hindu Funerals

Funeral Arrangements and Attire

Funerals are unique in Hinduism because they are normally held at a crematorium, although modern funerals are also held at chapels and family homes. They are also usually very simple and short. Sometimes, a vigil will be held between the time of death and the funeral, but not always. Hindu communities should reach out to a Hindu priest to help them determine what kind of funeral best suits their needs.

On the day of the funeral, the body will be transported to the crematorium, chapel, or wherever the funeral is to be held, followed by a procession of mourners. They might chant texts like Bhagavad Gita or hymns like Om Namah Sivaya. At the crematorium, the body is viewed by the mourners in a respectful manner, and offerings such as rice, ghee, flowers, and incense are sometimes made. After the offerings are made, a Hindu priest will lead the guests in a series of chants and mantras. The final ritual is called the mukhagni and is conducted by a close family member or a Hindu priest. The ceremony is a final chance to honor the deceased and wish them a peaceful transition after death.

Flowers may be sent ahead of time so the family can display them modestly during the ceremony. No flowers should be brought on the day of the funeral. Unless the family states otherwise, guests can expect to dress modestly in white. No head covering is typically required for funeral attire.

Resources on Hindu Funerals:

- [What to Expect at a Hindu Funeral in the US - Hollywood Forever](#)
- [Hindu funeral & death rituals: A complete guide - Memorial Planning](#)
- [Hindu Funeral Traditions](#)

Hindu Mourning Period and Grief

Mourning practices for Hindu communities are incredibly diverse in the United States. Some may want to spend time surrounded by family and loved ones while others might prefer private meditation and spiritual reflection. While there is no right or wrong way for Hindus to mourn their dead, Hindu religion has some traditions that are intended to support the mourners in their time of grief.

A typical Hindu mourning period lasts anywhere from ten to thirty days. On the tenth day, a ceremony called the Shraddah is held. The ceremony is performed to help the soul transition from one life to the next and have a peaceful process of reincarnation. On this day, it is appropriate for guests to bring food, (specifically fruit), and other gifts of sympathy. Balls of rice called pindas are made on this day and offered to the souls of those who have died as nourishment. Sometimes the family will perform other acts of merit such as making meals for the Hindu priests.

On the first anniversary of the death, the family might hold a celebration in which they gather the community to pray, eat, and celebrate the life of their loved one. The Shraddha, is again, performed on this day.

To express condolences for the family, phone calls and visits are appropriate. Some families may wish to receive flowers while others will not, so checking before ordering flowers is a good idea. Empathic gestures, small acts of kindness, and a willingness to listen are all ways in which people can express support for a grieving family.

Resources on Hindu Grieving and Mourning:

- [Hindu Funeral Rites and Death Rituals | Funeral Partners](#)
- [Annual Death Anniversary Rituals in Hindu Families](#)
- Resources on the Shraddha
 - [Shraddha | Rituals, Beliefs, & Traditions | Britannica](#)
 - [Understanding Shraadh: A Comprehensive Guide](#)

Complete List of Online Resources

Home Funeral Alliance

- [Home Funeral Alliance](https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/) - <https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/>
- State Laws:
 - [Home Funeral Alliance State Laws](#)

Resources For Hindu Theology on Death:

- [5 things to know about Hindus and death](#)
- [Hinduism & End-of-Life Care](#)
- [Death - Hinduism, Reincarnation, Karma | Britannica](#)

Resources on How to Prepare for the Death of a Hindu and Provide Spiritual Comfort:

- [Helping People to Connect to the Divine](#)
- [Hinduism & End-of-Life Care](#)

Resources on Body Care and Disposition Practices:

- [Hindu Funeral Rites and Death Rituals | Funeral Partners](#)
- [Why Cremation is Preferred in Hinduism – And When Burial is Chosen Instead](#)
- [A Comprehensive Guide to Hindu Funeral Traditions](#)
- Human Composting and Water Cremation
 - [Our Model | Recompose](#)
 - [Human Composting: How it Works and Where It's Legal](#)
 - [Alkaline Hydrolysis - Cremation Association of North America \(CANA\)](#)
 - [Water Cremation \(Aquamation\): The Complete Guide to Alkaline Hydrolysis - US Funerals Online](#)

Resources on Hindu Funerals:

- [What to Expect at a Hindu Funeral in the US - Hollywood Forever](#)
- [Hindu funeral & death rituals: A complete guide - Memorial Planning](#)
- [Hindu Funeral Traditions](#)

Resources on Hindu Grieving and Mourning:

- [Hindu Funeral Rites and Death Rituals | Funeral Partners](#)
- [Annual Death Anniversary Rituals in Hindu Families](#)
- Resources on the Shraddha
 - [Shraddha | Rituals, Beliefs, & Traditions | Britannica](#)
 - [Understanding Shraadh: A Comprehensive Guide](#)

Jain Deathcare



Jain Funerals and Deathcare

Jain Deathcare

Jain funeral services center the spiritual values of non-violence, unattachment, and humility. Because Jains believe in the cycle of reincarnation, typical funeral rites are performed to help facilitate a smooth transition to the next life.

Preparing for Death

When a Jain is nearing death, they may want to take time for spiritual reflection through reading scripture, chanting hymns, and praying. Some very devout Jains may vow to fast to purify the soul before they die.

Caring for the Body

Jain funerals happen quickly, so the body is not usually embalmed.

Close family members might participate in washing the body before dressing it and anointing it with sandalwood perfume. Jains prefer to be cremated.

Funerals

During the service various stavans will be recited which are special hymns of the Jain tradition. Mourners may wish to sprinkle a handful of rice over the deceased. Because Jains respect all living beings, it is not appropriate to have any flowers at the funeral.

Mourning and Grief

After the service, the family might hold a Chaas Pivanu which is a traditional vegan funerary meal.

The typical mourning period for Jains lasts thirteen days, but each family will have a different process for mourning.



Jain Death Care and Funeral Guidebook

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Jain Death Care Guidebook Overview

As in the case of all religions and belief systems, death holds a great deal of significance in Jainism and is practiced diversely in the United States. Ways to care for and honor the dead depend on family traditions, individual religious beliefs, and situational circumstances. It is important that those who are practicing Jain death care feel empowered to hold a funeral that reflects the wishes of the deceased and the family. Death care is highly personal and individualistic within Jainism, and the diversity of the traditions are apparent in community death practices. It can be helpful to consult a Jain priest or religious chaplain who can help connect those close to death and their families to resources for Jains experiencing loss. A religious professional or funeral director can also help the family determine what kinds of personal elements they would like to include or not include in a funeral.

This guide is intended to be an overview of potential options and resources to help Jains prepare for death, care for the body, plan a funeral, and process their grief and mourning. It is not comprehensive and is not intended to be followed exactly. Please feel free to take any parts that feel meaningful and helpful and leave behind those that do not serve you. The process of death can be an overwhelming and difficult time, and this guide is one resource intended to help people navigate it.

For more information on how to hold an independent or home funeral, please visit the Home Funeral Alliance at [Home Funeral Alliance](https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/), <https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/>.

Jainism and Beliefs Surrounding Death

The word Jain means “one who conquers the evil within one’s self”. Jainism centers the values of non-violence, unattachment, and humility in their religious belief system. Similarly to Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism, Jainism teaches that death is a natural step in the cycle of life. Jains believe in reincarnation which follows the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. Therefore, death is not seen as an end, but as a transition period into a different life. The kind of life someone will be reborn into is determined by the karmic merit accrued in one’s previous life. Jains don’t believe in an ultimate creator God or supreme divinity, but rather, they believe that the most noble pursuit is to live a moral life which respects all living beings. Jains hope to eventually be liberated from the cycle of life by living rightly and learning to be a more compassionate being. This will liberate them from the cycle of reincarnation and allow them to attain moksha - the freedom of the soul from cycles of rebirth.

Jains, like Hindus, believe that the soul is called atman which translates to “one’s true self”. This idea of self is different from the body or physical self as well as the ego and mind. Atman is what continues on to be reincarnated to the next life and will eventually be liberated.

Jains often take vows of non-violence which prohibit them from causing any harm to any living being. This includes becoming vegan or vegetarian as not to consume animal products. Sometimes, this vow includes refraining from consuming root vegetables which destroy the ecosystem of the soil they are grown in when they are pulled out of the ground and harvested. Jains are typically not allowed to drink alcohol and often commit to a life of celibacy or sexual abstinence. Many of these principles of non-violence and sustainability are incorporated into Jain funerals and deathcare.

Resources For Jain Theology on Death:

- [Jainism Introduction | Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology](#)
- [Jainism | Definition, Beliefs, History, Literature, & Facts | Britannica](#)
- [Why Don't Jains Eat Root Vegetables? - Arihanta Institute](#)

Preparing For Death

The religious beliefs of Jainism can help inform best practices for preparing them for the transition to death. When Jains are facing death, they typically use it as an opportunity for spiritual reflection. They may do this by reciting certain prayers, mantras, or studying specific teachings presented in scripture. Jains may wish to refrain from taking medications that contain animal products, and they might request to be cared for by a doctor of the same gender, if possible. It is common for Jains to wish to be surrounded by family and friends as they near death. Contacting a religious chaplain or Jain priest can be helpful during this time. They will be able to support the dying person and their family in performing any specific rituals and ceremonies they would like. The dying person may also reflect on their lifetime and express wishes and hopes for their next life. Spending time with a person who is dying and providing comfort, empathy, and a listening ear are good ways to support them through the transition.

Some very devout Jains will wish to take part in a fasting ritual at the end of their lives. The vow is called *sallekhanā*, and is taken in order to free the soul from the attachments that tether it to the cycle of reincarnation. A person who takes this vow does not eat or drink anything until death. If a dying person wishes to take part in this ritual, a trusted authority in the Jain community should be contacted to help facilitate the *sallekhanā*.

Resources on How to Prepare for the Death of a Jain and Provide Spiritual Comfort:

- [Surviving Images: Visualizing the Jain Fast Until Death | Center for the Study of World Religions](#)
- [Care for Jain Patients](#)
- [Jain Funeral Procedures Salgia Final](#)

Caring for the Body

Following the Death

When caring for Jains who have died, families and religious professionals may perform rituals that are rooted in the qualities of simplicity, respect, and brevity. After the moment of death, a close family member may wish to close the eyes and mouth of the deceased. Jain funeral rites take place promptly after the death, so the body typically remains in the home until then.

Vidhi services are rituals that are performed throughout the entire deathcare process in Jainism and Hinduism. They begin after death, and don't conclude until the mourning period has ended. The rituals include certain prayers, body preparation and anointing, and funeral proceedings.

The family might perform a ritual cleansing of the body and anoint it with sandalwood powder and ghee on the forehead, hands, and feet. The cleansing is usually done by members of the same sex as the deceased and is done with the utmost care. After the cleaning, the body is then either dressed in nice clothes (a modern tradition) or wrapped in a white sheet called a kafan to signify purity (traditional method). A strand of sandalwood mala beads are usually laid around the body as well. Someone may anoint the forehead of the deceased with essential oils and sandalwood perfume. It is important that no fresh flowers are used to decorate the body, as it violates the principles of harming living things.

Immediately after death there is a prarthana sabha, which is a period of time that the family can come to pay their respects to the body and offer their condolences to the family. During the prarthana sabha, family members might read devotional prayers and recite relevant scripture.

The body is typically kept at the family home before the funeral, as Jainism encourages cremations to happen within 48 hours of the death. Because Jain funerals typically happen between 24-48 hours after the death, embalming is not necessary. For general information about how to care for the body in a private residence consult the Home Funeral Alliance Guidebook which can be accessed at [Home Funeral Alliance](https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/), <https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/>.

Jain Cremations

Because of the environmental implications and a desire for simplicity, cremation is the preferred choice for Jains. The body holds no significance in the religion other than to house the soul, and Jains believe that the soul departs from the body immediately upon death. Part of Vidhi services dictate that ashes should be spread somewhere in a flowing body of water like a river. Cremations are prompt and usually take place immediately following the funeral service.

Environmentally Friendly Disposition

Because Jains are not usually embalmed, they are able to choose a variety of environmentally friendly disposition options. Options like human composting and water cremation allow the body of the deceased to be converted into nutrient rich fertilizer. The fertilizer can then be used to grow trees, plants, and gardens or donated to conservation projects. Organ donation and the donation of a body to science are also meaningful ways for Jains to give to humanist causes. For more information on how to hold Jain funerals that are environmentally friendly, consult the resources below on human composting and water cremation. Combining eco-friendly disposition practices with the Jain faith can be a meaningful way to honor a person who was fond of the environment and nature.

Resources on Body Care and Disposition Practices:

- [Jain: Final Rites](#)
- [Organising a Jain funeral – Heena Modi](#)
- [Honouring The Departed: A Guide To Funeral Vidhi Services](#)
- Human Composting and Water Cremation
 - [Our Model | Recompose](#)
 - [Human Composting: How it Works and Where It's Legal](#)
 - [Alkaline Hydrolysis - Cremation Association of North America \(CANA\)](#)
 - [Water Cremation \(Aquamation\): The Complete Guide to Alkaline Hydrolysis - US Funerals Online](#)

Jain Funerals

Funeral Arrangements

Jain funeral services are typically short and simple, keeping in mind the values of impermanence and humility. When starting to plan a funeral, it may be helpful to reach out to the deceased's religious community for support. Contacting a Jain priest or religious chaplain might be helpful in determining what kind of funeral best suits their needs.

On the day of the funeral, the body will be transported in a casket to the location of the funeral. Unless there are specific requests otherwise, the casket is usually left open during the funeral service so guests might pay their respects.

Sometimes, a container of rice is kept on a table near the casket so mourners can sprinkle a handful of it on the body as a sign of respect. Also on the table, a special lamp called a *deevo* is lit. The wick is dipped in ghee to symbolize divine purity. The lamp burns until the disposition occurs. A photograph of the person may also be placed on the table.

Funeral Service Customs

During the service, a series of stavans are recited. Stavans are spiritual hymns and songs that are important pillars in the liturgical tradition of Jainism. Oftentimes, particular stavans are selected for a funeral service because of their content which is relevant to the mournful circumstances. Other prayers and passages from Jain scripture which resonate with the family of the deceased may also be read. Those who were close to the deceased will read eulogies or other statements that express their affection and grief for the person who has died. At the end of the funeral, the navkar mantra is recited by all of the mourners, and they are given a final opportunity to pay their respects to the body. The ceremony is a final chance to honor the deceased and wish them a peaceful transition after death.

Funeral Attire

It is inappropriate to send flowers to a Jain funeral because they are seen as violating the Jain principle of non-harm. There will also not be any natural flowers displayed at the service. Unless the family states otherwise, guests can expect to dress modestly in dark clothing or in traditional white Jain attire. No head covering is typically required for funeral attire.

Resources on Jain Funerals:

- [Jain Funeral Procedures Salgia Final](#)
- [Jain Cultural Services](#)
- [Jain: Final Rites](#)

Jain Mourning Period and Grief

Different mourning practices may be more suitable than others for different families mourning the loss of a Jain. Some may want to spend time surrounded by family and loved ones while others might prefer private meditation and spiritual reflection. While there is no right or wrong way for Jains to mourn their dead, Jainism has some traditions that are intended to support the mourners in their time of grief.

Sometimes after the funeral, a family will wish to host a traditional funerary meal called Chaas Pivanu. The family of the deceased will arrange this meal either at a restaurant or have it catered in a different location (outside, at the family home, etc.). The meal will likely be vegan and will also not have root vegetables in it. At Chaas Pivanu, people might read more selections from scripture and offer reflections and other significant memories. It is a time for the family and friends to mourn together as a community and support each other in their time of grief.

A typical Jain mourning period lasts for thirteen days. During this time, mourners may refrain from cooking, cleaning, and going to work to allow themselves time to grieve their loss. It is a kind gesture to support the family during this time by offering emotional support, helping with daily tasks of living, and providing comfort. On the thirteenth day, a prayer service called Therhavin is held. This marks the official end of the Jain mourning period.

On the first anniversary of the death, the family might hold a celebration in which they gather the community to pray, eat, and celebrate the life of their loved one. To express condolences for the family, phone calls and visits are appropriate. Empathic gestures, small acts of kindness, and a willingness to listen are all ways in which people can express support for a grieving family.

Resources on Jain Grieving and Mourning:

- [The Significance of the 13-Day Mourning Period: What Friends Need to Know](#)
- [Hinduism: Periods of Mourning | eCondolence.com](#)
- [Honouring The Departed: A Guide To Funeral Vidhi Services](#)

Complete List of Online Resources

National Home Funeral Alliance

- [Home Funeral Alliance](https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/) - <https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/>
- State Laws:
 - [Home Funeral Alliance State Laws](#)

Resources For Jain Theology on Death:

- [Jainism Introduction | Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology](#)
- [Jainism | Definition, Beliefs, History, Literature, & Facts | Britannica](#)
- [Why Don't Jains Eat Root Vegetables? - Arihanta Institute](#)

Resources on How to Prepare for the Death of a Jain and Provide Spiritual Comfort:

- [Surviving Images: Visualizing the Jain Fast Until Death | Center for the Study of World Religions](#)
- [Care for Jain Patients](#)
- [Jain Funeral Procedures Salgia Final](#)

Resources on Body Care and Disposition Practices:

- [Jain: Final Rites](#)
- [Organising a Jain funeral – Heena Modi](#)
- [Honouring The Departed: A Guide To Funeral Vidhi Services](#)
- Human Composting and Water Cremation
 - [Our Model | Recompose](#)
 - [Human Composting: How it Works and Where It's Legal](#)
 - [Alkaline Hydrolysis - Cremation Association of North America \(CANA\)](#)
 - [Water Cremation \(Aquamation\): The Complete Guide to Alkaline Hydrolysis - US Funerals Online](#)

Resources on Jain Funerals:

- [Jain Funeral Procedures Salgia Final](#)
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Secular/Non-Religious Deathcare

Non-Religious and Secular Death Care



Death Care for Religious Nones

Religious and spiritual “Nones” are people who describe themselves as religiously unaffiliated, atheist, agnostic, spiritual, or nothing in particular. Practicing death care is an important way for Nones to process complex feelings around death and engage in meaningful rituals to honor those who have died.

Caring for the Body



If a family wishes to care for the deceased themselves, they may perform certain rituals for the body that include: washing and preparing the body, holding ceremonies of honor, decorating a casket, or making a memory table with the person's belongings. Cremation, green burials, human composting, or any other form of disposition are typical for Nones.

Mourning and Grief

Mourning practices for Nones are very diverse and can take many different forms. There is no right or wrong way to grieve, and it is important to remember that the mourning process is not linear, and can evolve and change. Developing a network of support is an important step in processing the complex reality of losing a loved one.

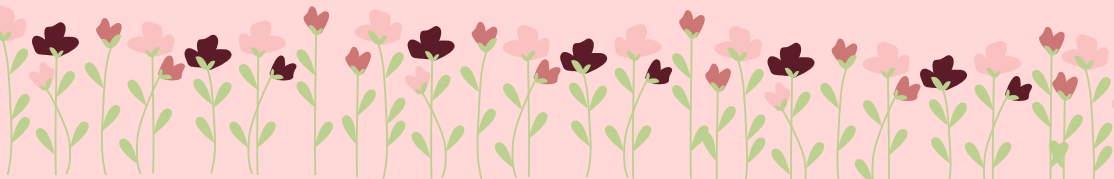


Preparing for Death

Those who are close to death often wish to reflect on their lives and the experiences they have had. They might find comfort in rituals like writing letters, listening to music, and lighting candles. Spiritual chaplains are available to help facilitate meaning-making rituals for those nearing the end of life.

Funerals and Memorials

Families might hold any kind of funeral or memorial that best serves their circumstances. Funerals may include reading eulogies or poems, singing songs, creating altars, moments of silence, and paying respects to the body. Home funerals may be a good option for Nones, as they can be more affordable, environmentally friendly, and intimate.



Non-Religious, Spiritual, and Secular Death Care and Funeral Guidebook

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Deathcare Guidebook Overview

Regardless of one's religious or spiritual beliefs, death holds a great deal of significance for all people and is practiced diversely in the United States. Ways to care for and honor the dead depend on family traditions, personal wishes, and situational circumstances. It is important that those who are practicing death care feel empowered to hold a funeral that reflects the wishes of the deceased and the family. Death care is highly personal and individualistic, and the diversity of the traditions are apparent in community death practices. It can be helpful to consult a spiritual religious chaplain who can help connect those close to death and their families to resources for those experiencing loss. Chaplains are available to consult and assist people with any non-religious, spiritual, or religious background. A chaplain or funeral director can also help the family determine what kinds of personal elements they would like to include or not include in a funeral.

This guide is intended to be an overview of potential options and resources to help non-religious and spiritual people prepare for death, care for the body, plan a funeral, and process their grief and mourning. It is not comprehensive and is not intended to be followed exactly. Please feel free to take any parts that feel meaningful and helpful and leave behind those that do not serve you. The process of death can be an overwhelming and difficult time, and this guide is one resource intended to help people navigate it.

For more information on how to hold an independent or home funeral, please visit the Home Funeral Alliance at [Home Funeral Alliance](https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/), <https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/>.

Non-Religious and Spiritual Beliefs Surrounding Death

People who identify as “Nones”, describe themselves as agnostics, atheists, or not religiously affiliated when asked about their religious beliefs. Some may believe in God, while others do not, and some may be committed to a personal spiritual practice, while others do not practice at all. Today, about 28% of the United States identify as spiritual Nones.

Considering the diversity of beliefs that falls under the category of Nones, their ideas about death are also varied. Some believe that death is a purely biological process with no afterlife component, while others believe that there is some kind of spiritual afterlife, whether it be reincarnation or a continuation of some other kind. Many claim to not know one way or the other, although they have a personal feeling that death is not the end. Regardless of what someone believes happens after death, it is important for people to engage in a practice called “meaning-making” at the end of life. Meaning making is done in all religious and spiritual traditions and is how all people derive meaning and value from their experiences. Creating a meaning-making practice around death is a way for those who do not hold any particular beliefs to find peace at the end of their lives. Additionally, family, friends, and care-takers may also wish to find a meaning-making practice that helps them to process the death of a person and cope with their grief.

Resources For Beliefs on Death:

- [Religious ‘Nones’ in America: Who They Are and What They Believe | Pew Research Center](#)
- [Facing Death without Religion | Harvard Divinity Bulletin](#)
- [They don't identify with a religion, but they often believe in God, afterlife](#)
- [Why do so many ‘nones’ believe in life after death?](#)
- [Making Sense of Meaning Making](#)
- [Making Meaning - What Does That Actually Mean](#)
- [Secular Death | Harvard Divinity Bulletin](#)

Preparing For Death

When someone is preparing for death, they may experience a range of emotions. It is normal to feel sorrow, fear, anger, relief, regret, or peace. Some may wish to have some privacy for mediation and reflection, while others will want to be surrounded by family and loved ones. Many people want to talk about their lives and share special memories or impart valuable lessons. Leaving a legacy through writing final letters to family and friends or making requests regarding funeral arrangements and a final will may be important to someone close to death. Some people will find comfort in thinking about death while other people will prefer to direct their attention to something else.

Often, at the end of life, people feel more connected to nature and the world around them. Sometimes, they develop a more spiritual or religious outlook than they have had throughout their lifetime. They may wish to speak to a chaplain or religious professional about their feelings to help them find peace and clarity. This is normal, and can help people express their feelings while processing the transition from life to death. The end of life is often a time when people will wish to make final amends, share life lessons and wisdom, and get final affairs in order. Families, close friends, and caretakers might assist them in creating a meaning-making practice to help them prepare for the end of life.

Some possibilities for meaning-making rituals are:

- Lighting candles
- Sitting in silence or meditating
- Writing letters to loved ones
- Preparing and eating comfort foods
- Spending time outdoors or opening windows
- Telling stories and sharing memories
- Listening to music
- Reading quotes or poems
- Displaying photos of family and loved ones

All of these are simply options that can be adapted to provide support to those facing death. Oftentimes, spending time with a person who is dying and providing comfort, empathy, and a listening ear are the best ways to support them through the transition.

Resources on How to Prepare for Death and Provide Spiritual Comfort:

- Home Funeral Alliance Guidebook at [Home Funeral Alliance](https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/), <https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/>
- Personalized Rituals for the Dying and Their Families – Nikki The Death Doula, LLC
- Topics – Rituals to Comfort Families – Canadian Virtual Hospice

Caring for the Body

Following the Death

After the final breath, those who are present might wish to observe a period of silence to honor the moment of death. A close family member or friend might then close the eyes and mouth of the deceased. It is normal to feel a range of emotions during this time, and allowing whatever feelings arise is an important part of processing the death.

The person who has died might have already had wishes regarding funeral arrangements and body care. They may have expressed preferences to have a funeral at home, out in nature, at a funeral home, or somewhere else. Carrying out their final requests should be honored if possible. If they did not leave behind specific instructions, the family or caretakers may decide to have a funeral based on what they know about the person.

Having a home funeral is becoming a popular option as it can be more affordable, environmentally friendly, and intimate. Rituals for body care at home can include: washing and preparing the body, holding ceremonies that honor the person and the life they lived, decorating a casket or shroud, or making an altar/memory table with the person's belongings.

For more general information about how to care for the body in a private residence and to learn of other rituals that can honor the death of a loved one, consult the Home Funeral Alliance Guidebook which can be accessed at [Home Funeral Alliance](https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/), <https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/>.

Disposition

Non-religious, spiritual, and secular disposition can include many different methods of burial, cremation, and other kinds of disposition. Conventional burial and cremation are still very popular choices, however, alternative kinds of disposition are becoming more mainstream options. Consult the Home Funeral Alliance Guidebook for a full overview of methods of disposition.

Environmentally Friendly Disposition

If the body is not embalmed, they are able to choose a variety of environmentally friendly disposition options. Green burials are a form of burial where the body is laid to rest in a way that allows for natural decomposition. Options like human composting and water cremation allow the body of the deceased to be converted into nutrient rich fertilizer. The fertilizer can then be used to grow trees, plants, and gardens or donated to conservation projects. Organ donation and the donation of a body to science are also meaningful ways for people to give to humanist causes. For more information on how to hold funerals that are environmentally friendly, consult the resources below on human composting and water cremation. Eco-friendly disposition practices can be meaningful ways to honor a person who was fond of the environment and nature.

Resources on Body Care and Disposition Practices:

- [The Moment of Death: Creating Ritual and Sacred Space at This Time — Beth Cavanaugh](#)
- [Reverent Body Care - Dignified & Respectful Care](#)
- [Care of the Body After Death](#)
- Human Composting and Water Cremation
 - [Our Model | Recompose](#)
 - [Human Composting: How it Works and Where It's Legal](#)
 - [Alkaline Hydrolysis - Cremation Association of North America \(CANA\)](#)
 - [Water Cremation \(Aquamation\): The Complete Guide to Alkaline Hydrolysis - US Funerals Online](#)
- Green Burials
 - [Comparing Natural Burial Traditions Across Different Religions - Serenity Ridge](#)
 - [Plan a Green Burial | Step-by-Step Eco Funeral Planning](#)

Non-Religious/Spiritual Funerals and Memorials

Families of spiritual Nones might hold any kind of funeral or memorial that best serves the wishes of the deceased and their personal circumstances. They may or may not want the body to be present, and the size of the funeral could range from extremely intimate to very large. Many rituals that happen in religiously affiliated funerals may still be practiced, such as reading eulogies or poems, singing songs, creating altars and tables of remembrance, observing moments of silence, and paying respects to the body.

Some may wish to hold a kind of celebration as opposed to a funeral, which celebrates the life of a person in a non-traditional manner. This might include dressing in bright colors, holding a service outside, playing music that the person loved during their life, offering words of hope and love, and openly expressing the complexity of emotions that arise around death.

Anyone can officiate a non-religious or spiritual service, and they can happen within whatever timeline works best for the family. Often the purpose of the funeral will be to remember and honor the person who has died and to focus on the life they lived, rather than on a potential afterlife. It can include elements that people consider to be universal like love, gratitude, humor, grief, regret, and admiration.

Consulting a religious chaplain about how to hold a funeral that best serves your family and circumstances can be helpful. The Home Funeral Alliance Guidebook also offers a variety of ways to create a funeral practice that feels meaningful.

Resources on Funerals and Memorials:

- [Memorial Planning for Non Religious Funerals](#)
- [Non-Religious Funerals](#)
- [How to Plan a Secular Celebration of Life](#)

Mourning and Grief

Mourning practices for non-religious and spiritual communities are incredibly diverse in the United States. Some may want to spend time surrounded by family and loved ones, while others might prefer private meditation and spiritual reflection. There is no right or wrong way for Nones to mourn their dead, and it is important to remember that grief is not linear, and can evolve and change.

Some people may want to continue gathering and performing rituals to express their grief and honor their dead. Listening to music, dancing, making art, talking to loved ones, telling stories and sharing memories, meditation, and spending time with pets are all ways that a person can mourn their loss.

For those wishing to support the family during mourning, they can offer support by helping out with childcare and household chores, bringing food and meals to the family home, and being available to chat on the phone or visit. Sending flowers and donating to a charity are also nice gestures to let someone know you are thinking of them.

To express condolences for the family, phone calls and visits are appropriate. Empathic gestures, small acts of kindness, and a willingness to listen are all ways in which people can express support for a grieving family.

Resources Grieving and Mourning:

- [Bereavement: Grieving the Loss of a Loved One](#)
- [Coping With Grief and Loss | National Institute on Aging](#)
- [The Early Stages of Grief: The First Seven Days | Friedri...](#)
- [6 Ways to Process Grief After the Loss of a Loved One](#)

Complete List of Online Resources

Home Funeral Alliance

- [Home Funeral Alliance](https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/) - <https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/>
- State Laws:
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Resources For Beliefs on Death:

- [Religious ‘Nones’ in America: Who They Are and What They Believe | Pew Research Center](#)
- [Facing Death without Religion | Harvard Divinity Bulletin](#)
- [They don't identify with a religion, but they often believe in God, afterlife](#)
- [Why do so many ‘nones’ believe in life after death?](#)
- [Making Sense of Meaning Making](#)
- [Making Meaning - What Does That Actually Mean](#)
- [Secular Death | Harvard Divinity Bulletin](#)

Resources on How to Prepare for Death and Provide Spiritual Comfort:

- Home Funeral Alliance Guidebook at [Home Funeral Alliance](#)
- [Personalized Rituals for the Dying and Their Families – Nikki The Death Doula, LLC](#)
- [Topics – Rituals to Comfort Families – Canadian Virtual Hospice](#)

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- [Reverent Body Care - Dignified & Respectful Care](#)
- [Care of the Body After Death](#)
- Human Composting and Water Cremation
 - [Our Model | Recompose](#)
 - [Human Composting: How it Works and Where It's Legal](#)
 - [Alkaline Hydrolysis - Cremation Association of North America \(CANA\)](#)
 - [Water Cremation \(Aquamation\): The Complete Guide to Alkaline Hydrolysis - US Funerals Online](#)
- Green Burials
 - [Comparing Natural Burial Traditions Across Different Religions - Serenity Ridge](#)
 - [Plan a Green Burial | Step-by-Step Eco Funeral Planning](#)

Resources on Funerals and Memorials:

- [Non-Religious Funeral Guide](#)
- [Non-Religious Funerals](#)
- [How to Plan a Secular Celebration of Life](#)

Resources Grieving and Mourning:

- [Bereavement: Grieving the Loss of a Loved One](#)
- [Coping With Grief and Loss | National Institute on Aging](#)
- [The Early Stages of Grief: The First Seven Days | Friedri...](#)
- [6 Ways to Process Grief After the Loss of a Loved One](#)



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