



Government of Western Australia
East Metropolitan Health Service

Royal Perth Bentley Group

» In your time of bereavement



Cover artwork: '*Slight Down Pour*' by Western Australian artist Geoffery Allen from the RPH collection.

»» The first steps

- »» Inform family and friends
- »» Arrange the funeral and seek financial assistance if required
(see pg 6)
- »» Locate the Will and inform Executors
(see pg 11)
- »» Seek bereavement support from family, friends, GP or other service
(see pg 17)



Royal Perth Bentley Group Bereavement booklet

The staff of Royal Perth Bentley Group extend their sincere sympathy to you at this sad time.

When someone close to you dies, it may be hard to know where to turn for help, advice, or financial assistance.

This booklet provides information and practical suggestions to assist you and your family in your time of grief.

Royal Perth Hospital

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Understanding your grief

Few events in life are as painful as the death of someone close to you. Grief is a natural response to the loss of a loved one, and so is the healing process that follows.

When you lose someone dear to you, it's like a 'hole' - an empty space is created in your life. This 'hole' might be very large and will get in the way of everything you do, especially if the person who died was part of everything. It can be very hard to know what to do, and how to go on. Having support from family and friends will help at this stage. Eventually, you will learn to find a different way of doing things - getting around that 'hole' means that life goes on.

A grieving person may experience a wide range of feelings. These may include sadness, anger, guilt, confusion, disbelief, anxiety, fear or loneliness. Sometimes it is possible to feel a sense of relief or acceptance. You may also experience some physical symptoms, like difficulty sleeping, loss of appetite, or constant tiredness. If these problems persist please see your GP.

Grief is a very individual process and it is not helpful to compare yourself to others. There might be a range of cultural, ethnic or religious ways to grieve. Be patient with yourself and allow yourself to grieve in whatever way is comfortable to you. There is no specific time limit to grief and everyone is different. You don't actually 'get over' the death of someone dear to you, but you find a way to go on living.

Complicated grief

Although grieving is a normal and necessary process, complicated grief is where emotions are severe and long lasting and may require professional advice. This is more likely to occur to those who have lost their spouse, a young child, or lost someone unexpectedly. If you are concerned that a friend or family member might need some help, please encourage them to see their GP.

Tips to help manage your loss

- Talk about your thoughts and feelings with someone who understands and has time to listen.
- This is often helpful as part of dealing with grief.
- Expect to feel a multitude of emotions, which may feel confusing at times (e.g. angry and sad at same time).
- Seek a support system (friends, relatives, support organisations).
- Take time with your loved ones personal belongings. Sort through when you feel ready and have support if needed.
- Be compassionate with yourself during special occasions (birthdates, anniversaries, etc.).
- Treasure your memories. You may wish to make a form of memorial to assist with this (photos, book of memories, etc.).



Viewing the deceased

After death, an opportunity is available for family and friends to spend time with their deceased family member/friend. Although there are no formal viewing facilities at Bentley Health Service, you are welcome to spend time with your loved one in their hospital room immediately after their death. For patients of Royal Perth Hospital, this can be while they are still in their hospital room, or it can be done later in the mortuary viewing suite.

Please let staff know which you would prefer.

If you want to spend time with your family member/friend later in the viewing suite, this can be requested direct to the Mortuary Coordinator or you can request staff at Royal Perth Hospital to arrange this for you.

The viewing suite is located at the Mortuary (accessed via the purple lifts on Level 2). The Mortuary Coordinator is available from 8am to 4pm. After-hours viewings are done rarely in emergency situations and are left to the discretion of the After Hours Nurse Manager.

You may go alone, with family/friends, or with support from hospital staff. You may view, talk to, and touch your loved one, as you prefer.

Further viewings can also be arranged while at the hospital, and later at the funeral director's premises or other premises.

Royal Perth Hospital Mortuary Coordinator

Phone:9224 2459



Funerals and wills

When a family member dies, there are matters that must be attended to, most of which you may never have encountered before. Many decisions have to be made at a time of considerable personal stress. Family and friends can help you deal with these, and they may well be glad to find practical ways to assist.

Funeral arrangements

Making arrangements for a funeral may initially seem to be difficult or a burden. However, it often gives a person who is bereaved something to focus on and it can be an important and special way to say goodbye.

If staff are not already aware of your specific religious practices, please inform the nursing staff promptly and these requirements will be met where possible. A chaplain or hospital social worker can be available to help you at this time if needed.

The funeral arrangements begin with contacting a funeral director of your choice. The Yellow Pages has a large selection, or you may be able to find one through an internet search, or you may have heard of one through contacts. Do take time to check with a few funeral directors, as there can be a wide variation in cost. Most require three or four days' notice prior to the funeral. This allows you time to make decisions following the death of your family member or friend.

The chosen funeral director will collect your relative's/friend's body from the hospital mortuary, prepare them for burial or cremation (according to your requests), assist you in planning the funeral, provide opportunity for viewing at the funeral home and/or other premises, provide transport to the service and to the gravesite/crematorium. They can also provide emotional support.

Country transport

The process of transportation for a country funeral usually involves contacting a funeral director in Perth for the initial preparations and provision of a coffin, and they can then liaise with the chosen country funeral director for transport to the country. The country funeral director will then provide the service.

Interstate transport

For interstate burial, the family needs to nominate a funeral director in the relevant state regarding the funeral. The family also needs to contact a funeral director in the local Perth area to prepare the deceased for transport, which includes a requirement for embalming. The funeral director also arranges the registration of the death prior to transportation. Transport costs and the cost of embalming are additional to the usual funeral and burial costs, and could add a significant cost.

Overseas transport

For overseas burial, the deceased will be required to be embalmed prior to leaving Australia. Permission also needs to be given by the relevant embassy.

A funeral director in Australia will prepare the deceased and arrange the transfer with a funeral director as nominated by the family overseas. A Death Certificate is arranged both in Australia and in the country of burial/cremation. There is a significant cost due to preparation and transport expenses, in addition to the usual funeral costs.

Funeral costs

Funerals can be expensive and costs can vary considerably. It is important to know what you are getting and how much it will cost. The funeral director should provide a written quotation. You may be able to pay the amount off in instalments, but this must be pre-arranged and is usually a more expensive option.

Prior to arranging payment of the funeral costs, check with the manager of the bank where the deceased had bank accounts. Although funds are frozen, if there are enough funds available in their account the bank will usually release funds to the funeral director for the purpose of funeral costs prior to probate. This is usually arranged after written quotes are provided from the funeral directors to the bank.

You may be able to access advice and assistance with funeral costs and it is worthwhile exploring these avenues. Assistance with funeral costs may be provided by the persons' private health insurance or car insurance (in the event of a driver fatality). This may be called a death benefit, funeral payment, or payment to the person's estate. If you know details of the person's insurance company call and ask if any payments are available.

If the fatality occurs due to a road crash trauma, then the Insurance Commission of WA may be able to assist with funeral and memorials costs or reimburse for costs.

Insurance Commission of WA

Phone: 9264 3333

The Department of Veterans Affairs may be able to assist towards funeral costs for Veterans and dependents.

Department of Veterans Affairs

Phone:..... 133 254

Country: 1800 555 254

The person may have pre-paid or pre-planned their funeral. The person may name this arrangement in their will, or may have informed somebody close to them.

Centrelink can provide information on whether you are eligible for any bereavement payments.

Phone:..... 13 23 00

As a last resort, if there is no funeral fund and no money or assets in the estate to cover the funeral, and you believe you may not be able to afford the cost, you can contact:

Department for Child Protection and Family Services, Bereavement Assistance Program

Phone:..... free call 1800 854 925

www.dcp.wa.gov.au/supportingindividualsandfamilies/pages/bereavementassistanceprogram

Applications to the Bereavement Assistance Program must be made through your local Department for Child Protection (DCP) and Family Services metropolitan or country district office.

Note: If applying for assistance via DCP it is advisable to contact them before engaging a funeral director as DCP has a contract in place for provision of this service.



Assessment for financial assistance is income tested. If you receive a Centrelink pension at the married or defacto rate, or if you have received a carer's pension you may be eligible for a bereavement allowance from Centrelink. This may be required by DCP as a contribution towards the total funeral cost. You can contact your local Department of Child Protection and request an interview for financial assistance to assess if you can obtain assistance through their program.

The cost of a Death Certificate is not covered in a DCP-funded funeral and must be applied for through the Registrar of Births, Deaths, and Marriages, and the appropriate fee paid for a copy.

Financial assistance for Aboriginal families can be also applied for via the **Department of Aboriginal Affairs** on

Phone 1300 651 077

Fax 6551 8088

Death certificates

The Death Certificate is the official registration of death.

Following a death, the doctor will complete a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death Form (also needed for burial/cremation) and a cremation form if a cremation is requested. This form is usually completed within 48 hours of death, and is then given to the person responsible for notifying the Registrar General. This is usually the funeral director (unless you are arranging the funeral yourself) and the funeral director is then responsible for organising the certified copy of the Death Certificate.

Following notification, the registered copy of the Death Certificate is issued from the Registrar General (Registrar of Births, Deaths, and Marriages). This official Death Certificate is usually issued five to ten days following receipt of the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death form.

If the body has been donated to a university, the university will register the death. The next of kin or executor of the will can then obtain a copy by providing the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages with their proof of identity and the cost required. The executor must also provide a copy of the will naming them as executor.

The Registrar of Births, Deaths, and Marriages

141 St Georges Tce, Perth 6000

Phone 9264 1555 or 1300 305 021

The Mortuary staff at Royal Perth Hospital can arrange for a photocopy of the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death form. This arrangement is conditional upon the request being received within a day or two following the death of your family member/friend. The photocopy is usually accepted by banks, Centrelink, airlines (when seeking compassionate grounds for early provision of tickets), and most utility providers. It is not accepted by life insurance companies.

Wills

After contacting the funeral director, one of the first things to be done is locate the Will as this may contain instructions for the funeral. You will then need to contact the executor named in the Will who, with legal advice, will handle the estate. It takes up to six weeks to receive a Letter of Probate from application. Application forms are available for download from the Supreme Court of Western Australia website (details below).

Note: there may be delays related to the proving of the Will if the doctor has stated a contributory cause of death as dementia. An affidavit may then be required from the deceased's doctor as proof of sound mind at the time of making the Will.

If there is no Will, the Public Trustee (for WA and most other states), State Trustee (for Victoria) or a Solicitor can give you advice on what to do.

Remember, you may need to revise your own Will. Attaching a letter from your own doctor regarding your state of mind at the time of making your Will may be beneficial for the future executor of your own estate.

Advice on wills and intestacy can be provided by: Citizen's Advice Bureau, Legal Aid Commission, a private solicitor, or one of the trustee companies.

Contact Details

Public Trustees

Phone: 9222 6777 or 1300 746 116

Website: www.publictrustee.wa.gov.au

Website: www.justice.wa.gov.au
(click on 'Dealing with Death' or 'Wills & Estate Administration')

Probate Registry

Phone: 9421 5152

Website: Supreme Court of Western Australia
www.supremecourt.wa.gov.au
(click on Probate)

Citizen's Advice Bureau/Mediation Service WA (CAB)

Phone: 9221 5711

Website: www.cabwa.com.au

Provide Probate Application Kit for small cost. Will also assist with simple probate applications for small cost. Appointment to be made prior with lawyer.

Legal Aid Commission

Infoline 1300 650 579

Website: www.legalaid.wa.gov.au



Practical matters

Who to notify

There are a number of people and organisations that are important to contact in the event of a death. This checklist provides you with the people and organisations you may need to contact.

Personal property

When a person dies at Royal Perth Hospital all their possessions will be held in safe keeping by the Patient Trust Officer. To collect the personal belongings of the deceased, contact Patient Trust Officer at Royal Perth Hospital on 9224 3483. This office is located on Level 2, B Block, below the Physiotherapy Department.

When a person dies at Bentley Health Service, all of their possessions will be held in safekeeping on the ward and can be collected directly from the ward staff.

If the deceased resided at a nursing home/hostel, you will need to contact the nursing home/hostel in regard to any other belongings left there.

Banks, building societies etc.

Contact your local branch, explain your situation and ask to make an appointment. This saves you having to broach the subject at the general enquiries counter and allows the bank to have all the necessary forms organised prior to you arriving. You will need to take details of accounts, bank statements, mortgages, etc. with you.

Investments companies/corporations

Check whether the deceased owned any shares. Determine with the executor of the Will (if one is named) the person responsible to follow up on this. This requires notifying the companies regarding the death, and requesting a report on the number of shares and current share value. This will be needed for probate.

Centrelink

Notify as soon as possible if you or the deceased person have been receiving a pension or benefit.

Phone: 13 23 00 (local call rates from land line only)

Ensure you have your customer access number and pin number ready to speed up the process of getting through to talk to the Centrelink staff. There is further helpful information on the website below

Website: www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/subjects/what-to-do-following-a-death

Department of veteran affairs

If a veteran or a veteran's widow/widower, notify as soon as possible. You may be able to obtain assistance with funeral costs/bereavement payment and support. Please ensure you have the DVA number ready. You can apply online at the website below for the Application for Family Benefit Form the Benefit is up to \$2000. This can take up to 30 days to process.

Phone: 13 32 54 for general enquires (local call rates from land line only).

Website: www.dva.gov.au

Electoral office

If the deceased was on the Electoral Roll, notify State or local offices. This can be completed online. Ensure you have the post code to include the local office. See the website below. Please note the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages receive notice at the end of each month and they update the Electoral Roll.

Commonwealth 13 23 26

(local call rates from land line only)

State 9214 0400

Information Line 13 63 06

(local call rates from land line only)

Government authorities

Account names may need to be changed. The website below can be useful in changing or removing names from organisations.

Website: www.adma.com.au

- Shire
 - Councils - rates
 - Power
 - Gas
 - Water Authority
 - Telephone company
-

House

Transferring title may vary according to who is currently named on the title and how they hold the title, i.e.:

Joint Tenancy

Tenants in Common

Documents will need to be registered at the Western Australian Information Authority (Landgate).

Phone:9273 7044

Country:1300 556 224
(local call rates from land line only)

Website:www.landgate.wa.gov.au

Insurance companies

(House, contents, car, superannuation, life insurance).
Contact the company for advice on how to continue coverage or make a claim.

Health Insurance, RAC, ambulance, etc. need to be notified of change to membership.

Taxation office

A final tax assessment may have to be completed.



Car

(i) **Driver's license:**

Return license with covering letter to the Department of Planning and Infrastructure

(ii) **Vehicle Registration:**

The executor of the Will needs to obtain a Department of Planning and Infrastructure 'Deceased Estate Statutory Declaration' form to transfer the vehicle to the new owner.

Contact: Department of Planning and Infrastructure

Phone: 13 11 56 (local call rates from land line only)

Website: www.dpi.wa.gov.au

Other

Libraries, clubs, unions, and other profession bodies also need to be contacted



Counselling and support groups

Bereavement support services

People suffering the effects of the death of a family member/friend can often feel lonely in their grief. Relating to other people who have experienced similar loss can help reduce feelings of isolation. Talking to a qualified counsellor can also assist in the grieving process. Your GP may be able to provide a referral to a clinical psychologist in your local area for counselling.

The following contacts include self-help groups and organisations that can provide professional counselling. While every effort has been made to ensure information is correct at the time of printing, it may be subject to change.

The Aboriginal Catholic Ministry

Phone: 9328 7529

Mobile: 0408 447 062

Aboriginal Medical Service

Metropolitan - Derbal Yirrigan

Phone: 9421 3888

Other regional Aboriginal medical services and community-based organisations can be accessed from the Department of Health website

Website: www.health.wa.gov.au

Aboriginal Liaison Officers

Provide a support, advocacy and referral service to Aboriginal Patients at both hospital sites

Royal Perth Hospital **Phone: 9224 2711**

Bentley Health Service **Phone: 9416 3770**

Arbor (Active Response Bereavement Outreach)

Provides support for people who are newly bereaved due to suicide. It offers short-medium term counselling, referral, volunteer peer support and strategies for managing grief.

Phone: 9263 2150

Email: arbor@anglicare.org.au

Cancer Council of Western Australia

Offers counselling and bereavement support groups facilitated by Cancer Council counsellors.

Phone: 131120

Website: www.cancerwa.asn.au

Cancer Support Association of WA

Open grief and loss support group for those experiencing grief and also ongoing group support from group for carers and those with illness.

Phone: 9384 3544

Website: www.cancersupportwa.org.au

Carers WA

Provides grief loss and bereavement support to carers of someone who is dying or has died.

Phone: 1300 CARERS (1300 227 377)
(local call rates from land line only)

Carers Counselling Line 1800 007 332
(free from land line only)

Website: www.carerswa.asn.au

Centrecare

General and bereavement counselling service provided. Fees based on income

Phone: 9325 6644

Website: www.centrecare.com.au

The Compassionate Friends

A self-help peer support group open to bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings following the death of a child.

Phone: 9486 8711 (Mondays & Fridays)

Website: www.compassionatefriendswa.org.au

Coronial Counselling Service

A support and information service for anyone involved with or affected by a coronial death.

Phone: 9425 2900

Free call: 1800 671 994 (free from land line only)

Mobile: 0419 904 476 (after hours)

DonateLife

Free counselling for families of the organ donor.

Phone: 9222 0222

Website: www.donatelife.gov.au

Homicide Victims Support Group

Offers monthly peer support group for those who have lost a loved one due to homicide. Open to anyone who has lost a loved one due to homicide.

Mobile: 0451 974 685

Website: www.hvsg.org.au

Kinway

Counselling service provided. Fees based on income.

Phone: 9263 2050

Country and metropolitan centres

Rural & remote telephone counselling.

Free call: 1800 812 511 (free from land line only)

Website: www.anglicarewa.org.au

Leukaemia Foundation of WA

Counselling provided to families who have had a family member with Leukaemia's, Lymphomas, Myeloma and related blood disorders.

Free call: 1800 620 420 (free from land line only)

Website: www.leukaemia.org.au

Lifeline WA

Provides 24 hour crisis support service.

Crisis Line: 13 11 14 (local call rates from land line only)

Suicide Bereavement Support Counselling9261 4451

Website: www.lifelinewa.org.au

Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre

Provides free bereavement counselling for individual and families from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds (CALD).

Phone: 9345 5755

Website: www.mmrcwa.org.au

Palliative Care Australia

General information and support. If Palliative Care or Hospice were involved in care of the deceased, grief and bereavement support is available for the family and other carers through the service involved.

Website: www.pallcare.org.au

Palmerston Association Bereavement Service

Offers individual, couple or family counselling service available to parents who have lost a child (of age age) as a result of a drug-related death.

Phone: 9328 7355

Website: www.palmerston.org.au

Relationships Australia

General and bereavement counselling. Fees based on income.

Phone: 1300 364 277

(local call rates from land line only)

Website: www.relationshipswa.org.au

Road Trauma Support WA

Offers free specialised trauma support and bereavement counselling to all people affected by road trauma

Phone: 9420 7262

Toll free: 1300 004 814

Website: www.rtswa.org.au

Samaritans

General counselling including those bereaved from suicide

Helpline: 13 52 47 (local call rates from land line only)

Youth Line: 1800 198 313 (free from land line only)

Email support: support@samaritanscrisisline.org.au

Website: www.thesamaritans.org.au

Shadow of Suicide (SOS) group

Offers support groups for family/friends who have lost someone with the cause of death being suicide

Phone: 9381 5555 to access support group



Silver Chain

Bereavement counselling for families of patients known to Silver Chain Hospice Service

Phone: 9242 0242

Website: www.silverchain.org.au

Solace Association

Offers grief support for those grieving over the death of their partner.

Phone: 9474 3297

Website: www.solace.org.au

Yorgum Aboriginal Family Corporation

Offers bereavement counselling for Aboriginal individuals or families.

Phone: 9218 9477

Website: www.yorgum.org.au




Needs of a grieving child

Even very young children feel the pain of bereavement, but they learn how to express their grief by watching adults around them. After a loss children need support, stability and honesty, as well as reassurance that they will be cared for. As an adult you can support children through the grieving process by demonstrating that it is okay to be sad and help them manage their loss.

How can we help?

- Answer all questions as honestly, clearly and simply as possible while, at the same time, being sensitive to the feelings our answers may evoke. Younger children may need the same questions answered many times.
- Allow the child to talk about their loss and express their feelings without telling them how they should be feeling.
- Re-assure the child that they are loved and will continue to be cared for.
- Ensure as much continuity and consistency in their life as possible. It is important for the child to know that it's okay to go and play, and continue to go on with everyday activities. This helps to reassure them that life can continue with some things unchanged.
- Model healthy ways to grieve and help them understand that the grief reactions they see in adults is normal and will not last forever.
- Sharing memories can help children come to terms with the loss and what it means. Ways to encourage this include: drawing, painting, writing letters, making a



scrapbook with the child containing photographs and other mementos, and talking with the child about the deceased.

- Involve the child in planning of the funeral and preparing for special occasions such as the anniversary of the death, birthdays, Christmas.
- Be aware of the child's level of comprehension and relate to the child with that knowledge. Some explanations can be confusing and frightening to a child. Avoid metaphors such as 'gone to sleep', 'resting' or 'lost' as they may be confusing for children who can take terms literally.

Characteristics of age groups

Infant - 2 years old

- Have no understanding of death
- Are aware of separation and will grieve the absence of a parent or caregiver
- Will pick up on the grief of a parent or caregiver
- May react to the absence of a parents or caregiver and have increased crying or change in eating, sleeping, toilet habits

2 - 6 years old

- No understanding of the permanence of death
- Will worry about who will take care of them and about being left behind
- Picks up non-verbal communication
- May see death as something like sleeping – the person is dead but only in a limited way and may continue to breathe or eat after death

- May feel guilty and believe they are the cause of a loved one's death, because they were 'bad' or 'wished them away'
- Often have magical thinking and understand the world as a mixture of reality and fantasy
- Cannot put their feelings into words and instead react to loss through behaviours which may include irritability, aggression, physical symptoms, difficulty sleeping or regression

6 - 9 years old

- Still has magical thinking, yet begins to see death as final, but outside the child's realistic mind
- May still worry that they are to blame for the death
- Often interested in the causes of death and what happens to the body after death
- May experience a range of emotions including guilt, shame, anger, anxiety, sadness and worry about their own death

9 - 12 years old

- Understands that death is final
- May still worry that they are to blame for the death
- Begins an interest in biological factors of death.
- Develops high awareness of death and understands it may happen again
- Still worry about who will take care of them and may experience feelings of insecurity, clinginess and fears of abandonment
- Interested in rituals and spiritual aspect of death



Teenagers

- Has an adult understanding of the finality and universality of death
- Questions meaning of life if it ends in death
- May feel guilt, anger, and even some responsibility for death that occurred
- May act out in anger at family members or show impulsive or reckless behaviours
- May experience a wide range of emotions, but not know how to handle them or does not feel comfortable talking about them
- Thinks about life's milestones without the deceased (i.e. Graduation, marriage etc.)
- The need to be independent and separate from parents can interfere with the ability to receive support from adult family members



Sudden death

When a person dies and the death was unexpected or non-natural, it is a requirement by law for the case to be reported to the Coroner's office.

A Coroner's finding can take a significant period of time where an investigation is requested and an inquest is involved. During this period funeral arrangements can be made, however the funeral director will need to contact the Coroner's office in regards to setting a funeral date.

Interim Death Certificates can be obtained from the Registrar of Births, Deaths, and Marriages (9264 1555 or 1300 305 021), and are legal documents suitable to use with Banks etc. A final Death Certificate can be applied for approximately one week after the Coroner's finding or record of investigation has been received. If you have queries regarding the issue of death certificates, further information is available at:

Phone:1300 305 021

Website:www.bdm.dotag.wa.gov.au

Coroners Court of Western Australia

Free service in cases of coronial inquiry.
(available between 7am and 6pm)

Phone:9425 2900 (business hours)

Mobile:0419 904 476 (business hours)

Free call: 1800 671 994 (free from land line only)

Website:www.coronerscourt.wa.gov.au

Western Australian Police

Coronial Investigation Unit

Phone:9267 5700

Staffed 7 days, 7am to 2am.



Organ and tissue donation

The death of a family member is a distressing time, but it is also the time that the possibility of organ and tissue donation may be raised. There is a limited time frame in regard to donations, so questions may be raised during your loved ones admission or in the hours following their death. The questions will be aimed at finding the wishes of the deceased person regarding donation and then seeking permission from the family to support that wish.

If you are aware of your family members wish to donate, and you have not been approached, seek assistance from any of the caring team.

Sometimes organ donation is not possible, in these circumstances it may be possible for eye and/or tissue donation to occur. Eye and tissue donation can usually take place up to 24 hours after death, depending on which tissues are being donated.

If you would appreciate receiving further information regarding the potential for organ or tissue donation, please ask the staff to contact the on call donor coordinator immediately. The donor coordinator can discuss the potential for donation and explain the process with you. If your loved one is an organ and/or tissue donor ongoing support, information, invitation to remembrance ceremonies and access to counselling services can also be provided by DonateLife.

DonateLife

Health Department of WA

Phone: 9222 0222 or
9346 3333

Further information can also be found at
www.donatelife.gov.au

Queries regarding donation of bodies to medical science
can be made to the University of Western Australia's body
bequest programme coordinator on

Phone: 6488 3290



Post-mortem examination

A post-mortem examination (autopsy) is not routinely carried out, but is generally carried out for three different reasons:

1. A coronial investigation may be required (Coronial Post–Mortem) to determine cause of death where sudden death has occurred (as mentioned in ‘Sudden Death’ section).
2. At the doctor’s or family’s request to determine a better understanding of the cause of the death.
3. For study purposes; a post-mortem can be requested to show the cause of death and to confirm that the correct medical treatment has been given.

Facts about a post-mortem examination:

- It is a surgical operation performed after death to discover how and why the person died.
- It will not cause disfigurement to the body.
- It will not delay the funeral.
- There is no charge.
- It can be limited to one part of the body, such as the abdomen, although it normally includes an examination of all the organs of the body.
- There is no obligation. You are free to request or decline a post-mortem examination on your relative.

The question of whether or not to allow a post-mortem examination to take place may be difficult, and you may require more information in order to make a decision. If you wish to talk about this, please contact the post-mortem coordinator.

Post-mortem coordinator (Fiona Stanley Hospital)

Phone: 6152 5218



Compliments and complaints

Complimentary feedback may be provided directly to the area or department involved in the care of your loved one. Cards or letters are much appreciated. The Consumer Engagement Unit will also accept this feedback on their behalf.

If you have any concerns related to the care of your deceased relative or friend by the hospital, and have been unable to resolve these concerns by speaking to the relevant hospital staff, you may like to contact the Consumer Engagement Unit

There is a formal complaint process, however alternative assistance may be provided to those seeking information or other outcomes.

Consumer Engagement Unit

Royal Perth Bentley Group
Level 3, South Block
Wellington Street, Perth WA

Phone: 9224 1637

Fax: 9224 3487

Email: rpbg.feedback@health.wa.gov.au

or

Post:

RFBG Consumer Engagement Unit
GPO Box X2213
Perth WA 6847

Freedom of information

Often people have questions related to the medical care of the deceased prior to death. Fulfilling the need for answers to those questions may be part of the grieving process for you.

Access to medical records of the deceased is possible under the provisions of the Western Australian Freedom of Information Act 1992. Access may be for viewing the records, for having a copy of part, or all the records.

To access the hospital medical record of a deceased person, you must be their closest living relative. You are required to apply in writing. You may contact the Freedom of Information Office at Royal Perth Hospital or Bentley Health Service, which will provide you with an 'Application for Access to Documents' form and assist you with lodging the application. This application may provide access to a copy of the medical record of the deceased patient.

The Freedom of Information office will process your application as quickly as possible, however this can take up to 45 days.

**Freedom of Information
Coordinator
Royal Perth Hospital**

Wellington Street
Level 2, South Block
Perth WA 6000
Phone: 9224 7023
Fax: 9224 1399

**Freedom of Information
Coordinator
Bentley Health Service**

PO Box 158
Bentley WA 6982
Phone: 9416 3666
Fax 9416 3875

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