



CINDEA Canadian Integrative Network for
Death Education and Alternatives

*General Timeline
for Post-death Care and Arrangements*

Well in Advance of the Death

Just Before the Death

Immediately after Death

Within the first few hours

Within the first day or two

Within 3 - 4 days (or just before the burial/cremation)

Within the next week to 10 days

General Timeline for Post-death Care and Arrangements

(please consider downloading a PDF copy for your computer or tablet —
the PDF has active links to the further info you need)

<http://www.cindea.ca/home-funerals.html#timeline>

Well in Advance of the Death

- Make sure that **the executor supports a home funeral**, and is willing to fill and file the required paperwork (only they can file – bring 2 pieces of ID) in person with the local Vital Statistics and Consumer Protection offices.
- Check if **burials on family/private property** are allowed in your county or region; and if so, ensure that all required permits and conditions are fulfilled. Where permitted, regulations usually require a burial to be at least 4.5 to 6 feet deep. In Canada, it is usually only in rural areas that private burial is permitted: and you will need to check with your local county/municipal-area office, your MLA or MPP, or a lawyer to find out if this is possible in your locale.
- The **Notification of Expected Death in the Home** form (which may be called something different in your province/territory) can often be completed by a physician — usually effective for 3 months. If this document exists, then it is not required that a medical person be immediately called into the home to formally pronounce death.
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/accessing-health-care/home-community-care/care-options-and-cost/end-of-life-care/expected-planned-home-deaths>
- Have **Application for Death Certificate** form available, and the basic (non-death related) information filled out. The form is available in a fillable PDF format from <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/life-events/death/death-certificates>
- Make sure that **all personal documents and information** are readily available, as the executor will need them for the final arrangements, the Death Certificate, and dealing with the will/estate. These documents may include Advance Directives/Expressed Wishes, Representation/Health Proxy Agreements, Power of Attorney, Will (see our [Advance-Care Planning](#) page); and a clear list of information about the Death Journeyer’s affairs, such as assets, pensions, next-of-kin, etc.
- Find out which Funeral Homes are willing to provide **‘a la carte’ services**, such as transportation of the body or filing paperwork, if you think this might be needed. [see Resources in Canada Post-death page — [Post-death care information](#) (legal information and regulations re filing documents, etc.)]
- Check the **width of the doorways and adjoining hallways** in your home, to ensure that whatever casket you get will fit through them horizontally (otherwise, you will need to carry the body through the house via a stretcher or sheet).

- **Arrange for a casket or shroud** — making sure that it is the right size for the Death Journeyer, and record its measurements (for checking ease of movement into and around the home). If you choose a cardboard or pressboard casket and plan to decorate it, paint it with primer and/or the background colour in preparation for the decorating. [Note: at present, a casket or tray — rigid container — is needed for transportation to cremation.]
- Make initial **arrangements for burial or cremation**, and funeral/memorial services. We advise that you visit the cemetery or crematorium, so that you have a visual memory of what is available before you make the final arrangements. [Note: many cemeteries and crematoriums have a chapel that can be used for the ceremony — sometimes for free — which you might wish to use for the service, especially if there would be more people attending than a private home would allow for.]
- It is wise to start **writing an obituary** before an expected death, so that you are able to give considered time to it, and so that the Death Journeyer can have input into it if they wish — although it will need to be finalized after the death (for date of death, date/place of funeral or memorial service, etc.).

Just Before the Death

- A **Permit to Transport the Body** may be required to move the body from home to the cemetery or crematorium, or from the institution where the death took place to the home — you need to have a copy ready to fill out immediately after death. If there is a chance that your person might die over the weekend, contact your local Consumer Protection office; and talking to a supervisor, request a permit before death (a signed Notification of Expected Death form may be helpful here). A rented or family/friend's car is sufficient, as long as it is able to carry the body laid out flat (station wagon or van). If required in your province/territory, the permit will be available from your local Vital Statistics, or Business Practices and Consumer Protection Authority offices (check *CINDEA*'s <http://www.cindea.ca/resources-post.html#care> for links to offices in your province/territory).
- **Gather supplies** to care for the body post-death — including ensuring that you have a readily-available source for dry ice (see the Post-Death Physical Care PDF on our [Post-Death Care](#) page), or have pre-bought sufficient Cryopak ice blankets. Whether or not you are following a specific tradition in releasing the soul, it is wise to gather whatever readings, chants or other implements (candles, etc.) will be used in advance, so that they are readily available at the time of death.
- You **might want to rent a casket or funeral tray** (possibly placing the to-be-decorated-later cardboard casket in it) for ease of transporting the body (from hospital/hospice/residential facility, or around home) or the time of ‘lying-in’ at home. Check with your local Funeral Homes to see if this is possible.

Immediately after Death

- **Do nothing but be present.** Say your ‘final farewells’, etc., or do any traditional ceremonies that guide the soul out of the body (selected readings, prayers, chants, release of chakras, etc.). [Note: in most religious or ethnic traditions, this period immediately after death is considered a sacred time.]
- **Do NOT phone 911, paramedics, or the physician** (for at least one hour) — unless something unexpected has happened (in which case a coroner may need to be involved).
- **Start cooling the body** by opening the windows, or setting up a fan. You can turn up air conditioning, but not too high — be aware both that it may become too cold for visitors, and that you will also speed up the time that rigor mortis sets in (which would interfere with washing/dressing the body).
- **Record the approximate time of death** for the Death Certificate and other records. Do not trust your memory here — because at this time of intense emotion, memory may not be as reliable as it usually is.
- Begin whatever post-death **vigil or soul care** is appropriate (with attention to the need to wash the body before rigor mortis sets in).

Within the first few hours

Arrange for a physician or registered nurse to complete the **Medical Certificate of Death** — which they will have copies of, and will be required by Vital Statistics (for the formal Death Certificate) and for burial/cremation. However, **pronouncement of death is not required by BC law**, although it is widely recognized that pronouncement is sound clinical and ethical practice for nurses and physicians. [see <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/accessing-health-care/home-community-care/care-options-and-cost/end-of-life-care/expected-planned-home-deaths>]

- If there is no *Notification of Expected Death in the Home* form, and the Death Journeyer is not registered with a hospice society, **call the physician or coroner** within 2 hours.
- Complete a **Registration of Death** (*available directly from your local Vital Statistics office*) and file it with Vital Statistics. [Note: because our culture is used to having a funeral home formally deal with the Registration of Death, you will need to clarify to your Vital Statistics office that you are not using a funeral home and ask for the forms that they would usually address. Ask for a supervisor at the Vital Statistics office, or someone who knows the law regarding not using the assistance of a funeral home. It is available in fillable PDF format from *CINDEA*. but check that it is current.]
- If you are moving the body from a hospital, hospice or residential facility, you maybe required to have a **Permit to Transport the Body** in hand. You will definitely need to have a **Permit for Burial or Cremation** available (free from your Vital Statistics office, once submitting a Registration of Death and/or request for Death Certificate; but if the death may happen on the weekend, ask Consumer Protection if they would authorize a Permit to Transport the Body in advance of the death).

<https://www.consumerprotectionbc.ca/consumer-help/looking-for-a-private-transfer/>

- **Wash and dress the body** before rigor mortis sets in. [Note: some Death Journeymen may wish to return to the ground as they were born — if so, leave the body naked and cover it with a sheet.] See the Post-Death Physical Care PDF and the Videos, also on our [Post-Death Care](#) page.
- **Further cool the body** using dry ice or Cryopak ice blankets (which are safer to use — London Drugs carries it) — Tech-Ice packs can also be used, but are not as easy as Cryopak ice blankets. Treatment and placement of dry ice or ice blankets is clarified in the Post-Death Physical Care and Using Dry Ice and Gel Packs PDFs on our [Post-Death Care](#) page. [Note: because dry ice dissipates, you will not want to buy it until the death has actually occurred — although it is wise to ensure a source for it beforehand.]

Within the first day or two

- Complete the **Registration of Death** (within 48 hours after death) — form available from your Vital Statistics office (check that the copy you have is current, and/or request the fillable PDF from *CINDEA*). You may need to fill in the required information in the “TO BE COMPLETED BY FUNERAL DIRECTOR ONLY” section (only the ‘DISPOSITION’ section) at the Vital Statistics office, with proof that you are the executor or the closest relative.
- File both the **Medical Certificate of Death and Registration of Death** with your local Vital Statistics office — this needs to be done earlier if you are moving the body from an institution (hospital, hospice or residential care).
- Finalize an **obituary**. [Note: as obituaries are expensive, you might prefer to use an on-line memorial service. However, they do not serve exactly the same purpose as an obituary, as they are not accessible through the obituary section of the newspaper, where most people check for friends who have died. You can consider paying for a short obituary that includes the URL for an on-line memorial page. Many newspapers now offer an on-line guestbook — for free or a small extra charge — when an obituary is placed in their paper. However, there are also lots of non-newspaper-affiliated free ones available on the web. See a list of some at our Resources in Canada — Post-death page under [On-line Memorials](#).]
- Obtain a **Permit for Burial or Cremation** from your local Vital Statistics office, which is free in most provinces, after both the Medical Certificate of Death and the Registration of Death are filed. [Note: cremation can only happen after a waiting period — usually 24-48 hours after the death.]
- Obtain a **Permit to Transport the Body** from your local Consumer Protection office if needed (available online: <https://www.consumerprotectionbc.ca/consumer-help/looking-for-a-private-transfer/>)
- Send out an informal **notification of death** to all of the Death Journeyer’s family and friends, and any communities/organizations that they were part of. This can usually be done through e-mail (and making use of the Death Journeyer’s e-mail address book) — although many will hear about the death and any memorial service through the obituary. If an on-line memorial/guest book is being used, include its URL in the notification as well as in the obituary.
- Arrange for **visitation** (wake, lying-in) for family and close friends.

“By My Own Heart and Hand” — Basics in Home Funerals or Community/Family-led Deathcare

- Begin **customizing the casket** — especially if a cardboard/pressboard casket is used, it can be painted with meaningful symbols and sayings. [Note: if a Green Burial has been chosen, check with the cemetery as to which kind of paints and other decorations can be used — usually only biodegradable materials.]
- Make **final arrangements for the burial/cremation**, as well as any graveside or cremation-witnessing ceremony.

Within 3 - 4 days (or just before the burial/cremation)

- Unless the body is to remain unclothed, you may want to **dress your loved one** with the final clothes that they will be buried or cremated in (i.e., after rigor mortis has passed) if you have not done so already. If the Death Journeyer chose a shroud, now is the time to shroud the body (see information on ‘shrouding the body’ in our Post-Death Physical Care PDF on the [Post-Death Care](#) page).
- **Review your wishes** with the cemetery or crematorium staff to ensure that there are no complications with your wishes for the graveside or cremation ceremony (remember that you can choose to start the cremation process — i.e. hit the button — and can plan a ceremony around doing so).
- Just before burial or cremation, you may wish to also hold a **special farewell ceremony** at home for close family and friends, with the body present (a home version of an open-casket visitation or funeral).
- **Finalize all plans for the funeral** (possibly graveside or cremation room) service, if you plan on having one
- Set a date for a **memorial service** (if chosen), and perhaps include the date in the obituary. [Note: memorial services are usually held some time after the death — a week to several months, depending on the family’s need. Family and friends may be travelling from a distance to attend. As well, the Death Journeyer's caregivers usually need time to process the death, take a break from the post-death care and burial/cremation service, and attend to estate issues — as well as their own lives.]

Within the next week to 10 days

- Make sure that there are enough **copies of the Death Certificate** (formally certified or photocopies) for the Death Journeyer’s executor to handle the estate. [Note: you will need a separate copy for each bank account, property holding, pension, etc. Check with Vital Statistics or your Pan-Death Provider as to which ones have to be formally certified, and which ones can be photocopies.]
- Begin **preparing for the memorial service** (location, notification, the ceremony itself, etc.).
- If the executor is not a paid professional, they will need to begin **dealing with the will**, and any actions required by it — transfer or sale of house, distribution of personal items, etc.
- Consider **grief counselling** (though probably for a later date) — listings of individual practitioners or support groups are available through your local Hospice Society, any seniors' or family-care organizations, or on **CINDEA's** website listings for [Grief/Bereavement Counselling](#).

Reminder:

- A. the **Medical Certificate of Death** is provided by the physician or Nurse Practitioner; but must be included with the forms to register the death and get the Death Certificate, and to receive a Transport Permit.
- B. *the **Registration of Death*** (must be filed within 48 hours after death) form is available directly from your Vital Statistics office — or check that the form in this package is current, or request fillable PDF version from *CINDEA*
- C. **all other forms** are available through the links in the BC Column of the Legal Information and Regulations — by Province and Territory table on the *CINDEA* Post-death Resources page at <http://www.cindea.ca/resources-post.html#carePT>

Notes:

AfterWards

Take her not from me.
Let it be this hand
Who wipes the folds of her flesh —
A final encore to fading days.
With each tender stroke,
May her seasoned soul unwind its threads
from this mortal coil.
With each grieving caress,
May her enduring love weave more tightly
into the whole of my being.

Take her not from me,
Until the last essence of who she was is truly gone,
And I have captured only what she left for me —
In this heart and hand.

(Pashta MaryMoon)



Journeying Beyond



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