

Preparation of Body at Time of Death

Supplies:

- Identification Wrist band
- Ice Bags/cold packs for cooling body immediately after death
- Sheet
- Body Bag
- Transportation Chain of Custody Form

Key pieces:

- Experience of hospice staff
 - Communication between staff members
 - Educating family about standard processes helps ensure success of the procedure
Ex. "Here's the typical process... How do you feel about that?"
1. The supplies listed above should be delivered to the patient's home several days in advance. Please contact [Study Coordinator] if anything is missing.
 2. As patient approaches death, **continuous care must be initiated**. This ensures that the events that must take place after death occur in a timely manner. It is very important that death is declared immediately and prior to arrival of transportation.
 3. It is helpful to have open and honest conversations with the patient and family regarding what the processes are for preparing the patient for the Legacy Project as death approaches. *Ex. "Here's the typical process... How do you feel about that?"* Education about standard processes help everyone feel more comfortable about what is happening. However, it is important to respect the family's wishes and we give them the right to object to any processes or to revoke final consent.
 4. With the family's permission, clothing is removed as patient approaches death and becomes unresponsive (approximately 1-2 hours prior to death). Once patient has died, removing or changing clothing becomes increasingly difficult as rigor mortis sets in. **Always keep the patient respectfully covered with blankets or sheet.**
 5. Leading up to and after death, hospice staff can clean the body, wash the patient's hair, etc., at the family's request. Hospice staff should clean fluids that are released at death, even if the family does not specifically request this. This will make transfer to the body bag cleaner and less traumatic for family to see.
 6. Upon death, ice/cold packs should be placed around the patient's body, head, and back of the neck. This is to help ensure tissues are preserved for collection.
 7. ID bracelet must be placed on patient's wrist or ankle.

Building a Rapid Autopsy Program – A Step-by-Step Logistics Guide

Supplementary Material

SOP: Preparation of Body at Time of Death

8. As soon as possible, within one hour after death, please contact [Study Coordinator]:
Cell (preferred): (xxx) xxx-xxxx
Pager (if needed): (xxx) xxx-xxxx
9. After cleaning patient, hospice staff will place the patient in the body bag, ideally within 30-45 minutes of death and prior to rigor mortis. Patient should remain covered by a sheet. It is important to allow family to spend time with the body and this step should only be done with family's approval – communicating the time sensitive reasons behind this step is crucial to the family's understanding and acceptance. This final step must be done with compassion and respect. **Family should not be asked to assist in moving the patient's body.**
10. Please complete [documentation as needed].
11. Transportation will arrive approximately 1-2 hours after notification of patient's death.