

A HELPFUL GUIDE IN THE EVENT OF A DEATH



What will happen now?



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Losing a lifelong partner, a parent, a child, or a close friend is one of life's most upheaving events. Therefore, it is natural to feel lost and uncertain about what needs to be done and in what order. Questions pile up, and the answers are not always easy to find. To facilitate this process, we have compiled this booklet, which briefly outlines the practical aspects that lie ahead.

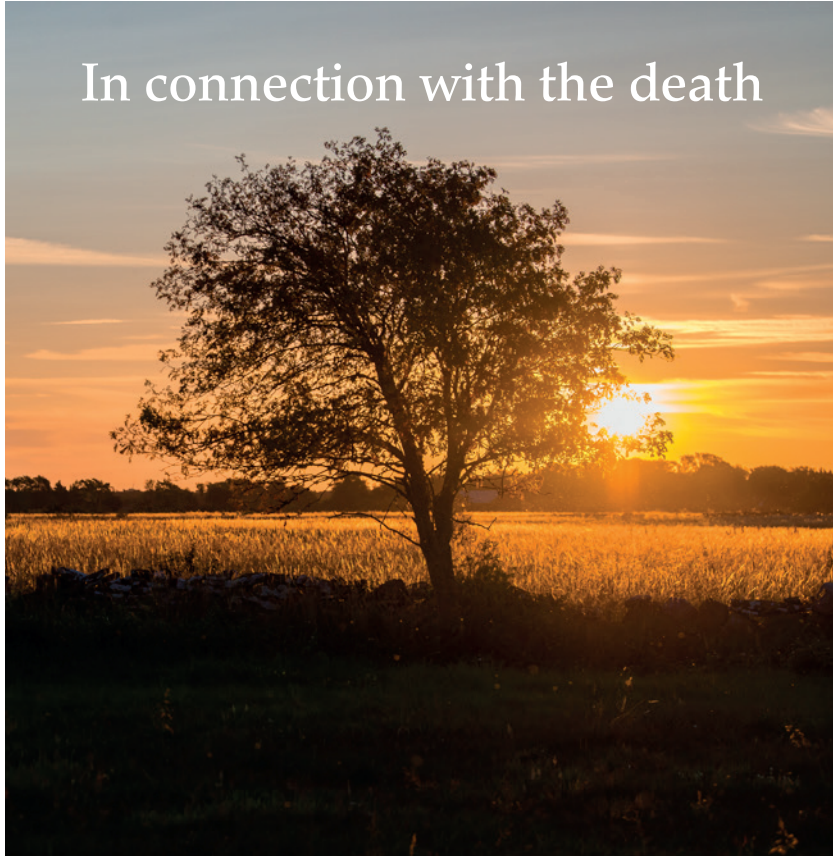
There are quite a few decisions you need to make within a relatively short time (usually the funeral takes place two to three weeks after the death*), but with the support of an experienced funeral home, your farewell will be both personal and beautiful.

Choose a funeral home close to where you live and schedule a meeting as soon as possible. Together with the advisor, you will go through and make decisions about all the details concerning the ceremony. Towards the end of this brochure, you can briefly read about what you will discuss during the meeting.



*According to Swedish law, burial or cremation must take place within one month from the date of death.

In connection with the death



Here are some terms and early questions that you may encounter and may need to address already at the time of the death. Healthcare professionals will assist you.

What happens to the deceased?

DECLARATION OF DEATH AND ESTABLISHMENT OF CAUSE OF DEATH

When a death occurs, a doctor is always called to examine the deceased to confirm that death has occurred. The doctor then issues a death certificate sent to the Swedish Tax Agency. Notification of the death is then automatically sent from the Tax Agency to other authorities within the state, municipality, and county.

If you, as a relative, want to know the cause of death, you can contact the doctor. You can also obtain a written certificate of the cause of death – and sometimes insurance companies may require such a certificate.

Regardless of where a person dies (even in the home), it is always the responsibility of healthcare, the county, municipality, or the police to take care of the deceased and transport them to a mortuary.

WHEN IS AN AUTOPSY NEEDED?

If there is uncertainty about the cause of death, a more thorough examination of the body through autopsy may be necessary. In that case, you will be informed as a relative.

It may be good to see the deceased

Even if death may have been preceded by a long illness, and you may be somewhat prepared for what will happen, it often comes unexpectedly. The first period can feel like you are living in a bubble, and it's difficult to take every-thing in. Seeing the deceased can be a way to understand that what has happened is indeed true – a confirmation that the deceased is truly gone.

If death has occurred very suddenly, perhaps due to an accident, it can be particularly significant to see and touch the deceased – a way to process what has happened and try to make the brain comprehend the unthinkable, that someone who was alive yesterday is lifeless today.

WHEN AND HOW?

The opportunity to see the deceased is usually provided at the hospital/nursing home, often in a special viewing room. The deceased is prepared first – washed, combed, and dressed in clean clothes. There are chairs to sit on, and there are lit candles by the bedside. This can also be arranged later with the help of the funeral home you choose.

IN THE EVENT OF DEATH AT HOME

If it is practically possible, the body can be dressed and placed in the casket at home. Otherwise, the deceased is picked up with a stretcher and taken to a mortuary.

YOU DECIDE

No one is forced to see the deceased against their will, and there are also occasions when it is not possible to do so. In such cases, you can still gather the closest family, including children, for a personal farewell around the casket. It is also possible to take photographs of the deceased – it can be helpful later in the grieving process.

Organ and tissue donation

Many people have made a decision in their lifetime about whether they want to donate organs or tissues after their death. Those who have not actively decided are assumed not to be donors.

Donation can be of vital importance for someone else – to receive an organ or tissue can be the only chance for a new life. Before the donation is made, it is carefully checked that the deceased has not been infected with certain diseases, among other things.

In the event of death in a hospital, it is the staff there who provide information about donation possibilities. In the event of death at home or outside the hospital, this is done by the police or healthcare professionals who come into contact with the deceased.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO BE CLEAR ABOUT YOUR WILL

It is crucial to express your will about organ and tissue donation to your relatives and have it noted on a donor card or in the national donor register. Talk about your will with your closest relatives, so they know what you want.

Sometimes embalming is needed for preservation of the body

Embalming is a method of preserving the body for a limited period, mainly for practical reasons. If you wish to bring the deceased home for a viewing and the funeral is to take place several days after death, embalming may be necessary.

A funeral home can provide more information about embalming and discuss whether it is necessary based on the circumstances and your wishes.



The first things you should do

When someone close to you dies, it is easy to feel overwhelmed and unsure about what to do next. Here are some important steps to take in the initial stages:

Inform the closest relatives

The first thing to do is to inform the closest relatives and friends about the death. This can be done through phone calls, text messages, or in person. Sharing the news will allow others to offer support and make arrangements to be present during the grieving process. It is vital that you inform the heirs of the deceased.

THE AUTHORITIES ARE AUTOMATICALLY INFORMED

When a person dies, the healthcare services send a death certificate to the Swedish Tax Agency, which in turn automatically notifies all government authorities within the state, municipality, and county councils. As a relative, you do not need to make this contact yourself.

LET OTHERS HELP YOU

Don't be afraid to ask for help if you need it - many people appreciate being helpful even if it is grocery shopping or walking the dog. If you don't have anyone to talk to, the hospital provides therapists or priests.

Choose a funeral home and book a meeting

Contact a funeral home as soon as possible to discuss the arrangements for the funeral. Funeral directors are experienced in guiding families through the process and can provide valuable assistance during this challenging time. Schedule a meeting to go over the details of the funeral, including the choice of casket or urn, the type of ceremony, and other preferences.

It can be beneficial to share personal information about the deceased, and preferences concerning day and time of the funeral, at first contact with the funeral home.

Take responsibility for the deceased's residence

If the deceased lived alone, someone needs to take responsibility for their residence. Secure the property, take care of any pets, and notify relevant authorities as needed. If the deceased lived with family or friends, discuss and delegate responsibilities to ensure a smooth process.

Involve children and young people

Death is a difficult topic for people of all ages, and it's important to involve children and young people in an age-appropriate way. Be honest and open about the situation, answer their questions, and provide emotional support. Consider seeking professional help if needed.





Before the meeting with the funeral home

Before meeting with the funeral home, there are a few key considerations and preparations to keep in mind:

The estate pays for the funeral

In most cases, the estate of the deceased is responsible for covering the costs of the funeral. The estate includes the deceased person's assets and possessions. If there is a will, the executor named in the will is typically responsible for managing the estate. If there is no will, the closest living relatives may need to make decisions collectively.

IF THE ESTATE CAN'T PROVIDE WITH THE MONEY NEEDED

If the deceased lacks capital, you can apply for economical assistance for the funeral costs at the municipality. You can contact the municipality regarding what laws apply in your city, or the funeral home can help you, but it is always the relatives that have to apply for assistance.

Why is a funeral ceremony needed?

Funerals serve various purposes, including providing an opportunity for family and friends to come together to mourn, remember, and celebrate the life of the deceased. The ceremony helps people process their grief, find closure, and offer support to one another. It is a way to honor the life and legacy of the person who has passed away.



What you will go through with the funeral home

The meeting with the funeral home is a crucial step in planning the funeral ceremony. Here are some key aspects to consider during the process:

The deceased's own wishes

If the deceased expressed specific wishes regarding their funeral arrangements, share this information with the funeral director. This may include preferences for burial or cremation, the type of ceremony, and any special requests they may have made. Respecting these wishes can provide comfort to the family and create a meaningful farewell.

Choice of casket and urn

During the meeting, you will need to select a casket or urn for the deceased. Funeral homes typically offer a range of options to suit different preferences and budgets. Consider factors such as material, design, and size when making this decision. If the deceased expressed preferences or if cultural or religious considerations play a role, communicate these to the funeral director.

Casket placement and transportation

Discuss whether the deceased will be placed in a casket for the funeral ceremony and how the casket will be transported. If there are specific requests, such as a particular vehicle or mode of transportation, communicate these to the funeral director.

Different ways to inform family and friends

Consider how you want to inform family and friends about the death and funeral arrangements. This may include sending formal invitations, creating an online memorial, or using social media to share information. The funeral home can assist with these communications and provide guidance on creating obituaries or announcements.

Choice of funeral ceremony

There are various types of funeral ceremonies, ranging from traditional religious services to secular or personalized celebrations of life. Discuss the preferences of the deceased and the family to determine the most fitting ceremony. Consider elements such as readings, music, and rituals that hold significance.

Choice of location for the funeral ceremony

Decide on the location for the funeral ceremony. This may be a place of worship, a funeral home chapel, a graveside service, or another venue that holds personal meaning. Consider the size of the gathering and the availability of facilities when making this decision.

Creating a personal farewell

Incorporate personal touches into the funeral ceremony to make it a meaningful and unique farewell. This could include displaying photographs, playing favorite music, or incorporating special rituals. Share memories and stories during the ceremony to celebrate the life of the deceased.

Burial or cremation?

Discuss whether the deceased preferred burial or cremation. Consider factors such as religious or cultural traditions, personal preferences, and practical considerations. The funeral home can provide information about available options and guide you through the decision-making process.



Grave or memorial grove?

If choosing burial, decide on the location of the final resting place. This may be a traditional cemetery, a natural burial ground, or a memorial park. Consider factors such as proximity, aesthetics, and any specific preferences the deceased may have had.

Burial of a casket can take place in:

- Casket grave with space for a gravestone (for one or more coffins)
- Burial chamber (for one or more coffins)
 - available in a few locations)

Burial of ashes (after cremation) can take place in:

- Urn grave with space for a gravestone (for one or more urns)
- Existing family grave for coffins
- Urn chamber and columbarium (a special burial room for urns)
- Memorial grove (where the ashes of the deceased are anonymously scattered or buried within a common burial area)
- Ash grave site/ash grove (with marked locations where the urn/ashes are buried)
- In water or natural ground (after obtaining permission from the County Administrative Board)



GRAVE SITE

For some, a gravesite can be an important place to visit to feel close to the deceased. For children, it may mean that it is the only place left in their hometown when parental homes and family farms have changed owners. For others, maintaining a grave can be a burden.

A MAINTENANCE-FREE ALTERNATIVE

Many choose a memorial grove because they want a maintenance-free grave, but it is not the only maintenance-free option. Ash grave sites and ash groves are becoming more common, and even a soil grave can be maintenance-free if no plantings are done, and the grave is covered with grass. Burial chambers and columbarium are additional alternatives for a maintenance-free grave.

With cremation, you can wait up to a year to bury the urn, using that time to decide how you want to proceed.

Funeral Day

The funeral director's representative acts as the host at the funeral, guiding the mourners and managing contact with the officiant, musicians, caretaker, and possibly pallbearers. Before guests arrive, all flowers sent to the funeral are arranged beautifully around the coffin, and memorial gifts are taken care of. The representative creates a list of those who sent flowers, which you will receive in a memorial album, book, or flower directory.



CHILDREN AT THE FUNERAL

A good idea for families with children is to arrive a little before other guests so that children can calmly see the coffin and have explained what will happen. Children often have many questions that the funeral director or officiant can answer.

DRESS CODE

Sometimes the death notice specifies how guests should dress. "Optional attire" is becoming more common, but it doesn't prevent guests who want to dress formally* from doing so. "Light attire," on the other hand, means light attire is required. Children can always wear their best clothes.

FLOWERS AND OTHER DECORATIONS

Flowers play a significant role in creating a poignant atmosphere in the venue and can also help convey a sense of the person being buried. A coffin doesn't need decoration, but most people choose to decorate it with flowers, sometimes even with a photo of the deceased. An alternative to coffin decoration can be a pall that covers the coffin. Many parishes and funeral homes have pall covers to borrow or rent. As the closest relatives, you probably also want a flower to place on the coffin when saying goodbye. It feels reassuring to hold something and present this flower as a final greeting.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND FILMING

If you want photos from the funeral, whether of the coffin and flowers, it's okay to take pictures, but it's preferable to do it before the ceremony begins or ask the funeral director to do it. Today, it's not uncommon to film the entire funeral or let distant relatives participate via media. If it's a funeral in a church or chapel, you must always first agree with the priest well before the ceremony.

* Men traditionally wear a dark suit and white shirt with a white tie for the closest relatives (spouse, children, siblings, in-laws) and black for other male guests (local deviations may occur). Women wear a dark suit, dress, skirt and dark stockings, or long pants.

SONGS AND MUSIC

If it's a funeral in the Swedish Church or another religious community, it's natural to choose hymns and songs in consultation with the priest or pastor. Other music, such as organ music and solo singing, is selected in consultation with the organist and soloist. If you wish, the funeral director can help with suggestions and guidance, as well as arranging soloists. If it's a secular funeral, you decide whether you want to sing a hymn or prefer other music.

PRINTED PROGRAM

The funeral director can help produce a program for the ceremony with information about the deceased and those who participated. It's often kept as a nice memory of the funeral day.

Memorial Gathering

After the funeral, it's common to gather for a while at home, in a rented venue, in a parish hall, or at a restaurant. It's a nice opportunity to share memories and have a communal meal or drink coffee together. The memorial gathering can be made very personal with photos of the deceased, perhaps a slideshow, and a memorial table where condolence letters, memorial gifts, a guestbook, etc., are collected.

For more information about everything related to funerals, visit begravningar.se – or call the Swedish Funeral Directors Association's consumer line at 020-210 210.



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