

What is embalming?

Embalming is the process embalmers use to chemically preserve and disinfect the dead human body. This procedure is performed to allow family members time to gather for the funeral.

By using the body's circulatory system, embalmers replace the blood with embalming chemicals. This is done by making an incision, either near the collar bone (carotid incision) or in the groin area (femoral incision).

Is embalming gross, and does it smell?

Embalming is similar to surgery in a hospital. It involves cutting tissue and exposure to blood. It smells depending on when and how a person died, there may be some unpleasant odors. Also, some of the embalming chemicals have a strong odor.

Where does the blood go when you drain it?

During the embalming process, the blood is flushed out the vein through a drain tube which is placed in the vein. From the drain, it flows into a flush sink (some what like a flush urinal) where it is chemically treated, before being flushed into the sewer system.

How long does it take to prepare the body?

The embalming process takes between two and three hours, depending on the condition of the circulatory system. Dressing and applying cosmetics take approximately one and one-half hours. Casketing, placing the body in the casket and positioning it, takes another half hour. In the case of a female an additional hour is needed for the hairdresser to set and comb the hair. The average total time to prepare a body for visitation is between five and six hours.

How do you cremate a person?

Cremation is the reduction of the body to bone fragments by the use of extreme heat. Most people are under the impression that what is left is ashes. This is incorrect. Although cremains are referred to as ashes, they have been reduced to a granular substance. The entire body is cremated. It is not necessary to purchase a casket for cremation. Most crematories do, however, require that the body be placed in some type of rigid container.

How does someone get started in the mortuary field?

Most states require two years of college. There are a few states that require a bachelor's degree. In most states, after receiving a degree, you must pass the state and national board exams. In Georgia, you are required to serve eighteen months of apprenticeship in order to obtain a funeral director/embalmer's license. Once licensed, funeral directors are required to attain ten hours of continuing education credits every two years.

How much does a funeral director earn a year?

It depends on many factors, such as years of experience, how many funeral services per year, number of nights on call and other responsibilities.

What does it feel like to die?

We do not know. This is a question no one can answer because those who die can't come back and tell us what it's like.

But what we do know is that death is as natural as birth.

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Ask Carl M. Williams Funeral Directors

Why do we have funeral homes?

Funeral services were held in homes long before funeral homes came into existence. At first it was the local cabinet maker that supplied a casket to the family, and the family members did the cleaning, dressing, and cosmetics themselves.

After the Civil War when arterial embalming began to be practiced, undertakers would come to the family home and prepare the deceased. Funerals were still held in the home. As American customs and attitudes changed so did funeral service.

The undertaker was asked to assume more of the responsibilities of the funeral and provide a place to hold the service for those who preferred not to have the funeral service in their homes anymore.

How long does it take to plan a funeral?

Planning most funerals at a funeral home takes approximately two to three hours.

There are no two people that are exactly alike and therefore no two funerals should be exactly the same.

Do you have to have an open casket?

Usually the casket is open for the time of visitation and closed during funeral service. The casket may be closed in cases of extreme trauma or weight loss.

Why do some people touch the body inside the casket?

Touch is the most intimate and powerful form of communication between two people. It is nearly impossible for us to survive without touching. Can you remember how good it felt when your mother or father gave you a big hug? Well, touching a person in the casket is a form of affection, a way to say goodbye. Some people have a stronger need to touch than others.

No one should be made to touch a deceased person. Children should not be forced to kiss a grandparent in the casket. This can have lasting negative effects. However, if family members do feel a need to kiss a loved one goodbye, they should do so. Most people kiss the deceased on the forehead.

Why do some people go out to eat after the funeral?

Part of it is tradition. Many times when a death occurs, neighbors bring food to the family's home. When words are inadequate, we send food or flowers. It says "I love and care about you." We usually share food with our family, people we love and care about.

Not only is the funeral luncheon a good place to share the stories of the deceased, but also a way for the family to say thank you to all that cared enough to attend the funeral.

Do you get the body right after the person dies?

Funeral staff go as soon as the death call is received. Most deaths occur in hospitals or nursing homes. Sometimes the body is removed from private residences because people wish to spend their last days at home where they feel comfortable, safe and loved. On occasions funeral staff are called to the scene of an accident.

Who decides what the person wears?

The next of kin usually bring the clothing for the deceased. Some people pre-plan their funerals, and have already planned what they want to wear.

Are funerals expensive?

Carl M. Williams Funeral Directors, Inc. offer a full range of funerals from inexpensive to expensive. The cost determined by how much the consumer wants to spend. The following factors effect the cost of the funeral:

- **Personnel**—someone is on call 24 hours a day, which means wages and benefits must be paid.
- **Facilities**—families require a nice funeral home that is able to accommodate their need.
- **Overhead Cost**—such as taxes, bookkeeping, office, lights, heat, air conditioning, etc.
- **Caskets**—what a funeral home must pay for the casket selected.
- **Vaults**— what the funeral home must pay for the vault selected.
- **Automobiles**—hearses, transfer vehicles, limousines, flower cars and cars to lead the funeral procession.
- **Crematories**—need to be paid.
- **Cemeteries**—sometimes the charge for opening and closing graves.
- **Police Escort**— sometimes police escort is needed for safety reasons.

