

Losing a loved one to COVID-19

As your loved one has passed away from COVID-19, your loss will be complicated by the need to prevent coronavirus from spreading further.

Find ways to cope with your loss

Losing a loved one affects everyone differently; there is no right or wrong way to feel.

Understanding what happened to your loved one may help. Speak to the healthcare workers who cared for them or others who know about COVID-19.

Contact the bereavement helpline on 082 925 5938 or 079 872 6408.



Talk about your feelings to a friend, relative or counsellor.

Take care of yourself. Get enough sleep and avoid using alcohol and other substances to relieve your grief.



Protect yourself and others from coronavirus

Get help with logistics

- Register your loved one's death. You will need their identity document and death notification from the hospital. Ask an undertaker for help.
- Arrange a funeral. When someone has died of COVID-19, cremation is recommended.

- Regulations to prevent coronavirus from spreading may not allow you to see your loved one's body. If you are able to do so, avoid touching or kissing them. It is okay to speak to your loved one while standing next to their body.
- If you receive your loved one's belongings, wash the clothing and linen with hot water and soap. Disinfect other items (phone, spectacles, toiletries) with diluted bleach solution. After handling unwashed laundry and objects, wash your hands well.
- If you had close contact with your loved one in the past 14 days, you may have caught coronavirus. You should quarantine (separate) yourself for 10 days from last contact to prevent passing it on.



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Hold a coronavirus safe funeral

- People may catch coronavirus from your loved one's body and also from one another at the funeral.
- A funeral usually provides the opportunity to say goodbye to a loved one. If you are unable to prepare a funeral as you are used to, plan to hold a ritual when it is safe, to help you say goodbye.



- Hold the funeral within three days of your loved one's passing.
- Maximum 100 people (family, guests and staff) are permitted to attend, provided 50% capacity of the venue is not exceeded.
- Consider live-streaming for those over 55 years or with chronic conditions as they are at risk of severe COVID-19.
- The funeral ceremony should last less than 30 minutes.
- Do not hold a gathering after the funeral; mourners should leave straight after the ceremony.

Prepare your loved one's body with care

- Washing and dressing your loved one should only be done by undertakers or those trained to use personal protective equipment.
- Your loved one's body must remain at the undertaker's until the funeral.

Ensure mourners are coronavirus safe

- Ask people not to attend if they are sick.
- Mourners must wear cloth masks at all times.
- Provide hand sanitiser or hand-washing stations.
- Keep a register of mourners. This will enable health authorities to trace them should someone develop COVID-19.

If you hold a viewing, do so safely

- Do not let anyone touch the body.
- Keep apart from each other.
- Wear a mask.
- Sanitise hands afterwards.



Keep 1,5 metres apart from others. Avoid handshakes, hugging or kissing.



National Hotline: 0800 029 999



Provincial Hotline: 021 928 4102



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