

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 hugging 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 10 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



- A funeral usually provides the opportunity to say goodbye to a loved one.
- Coronavirus is in the air and we are breathing in small droplets containing the virus. All gatherings including funerals are high risk for spreading the virus.
- Follow these recommendations to limit spread.

- Hold the funeral within three days of your loved one's passing.
- Limit number of guests: check latest 'Alert level' regulations for number permitted to attend. A smaller funeral is a safer funeral.
- 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.

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.

Ensure mourners are coronavirus safe

- Hold the event outside. If unable to do this, ensure all doors and windows are open.
- Ask people not to attend if they are sick.
- Mourners must wear 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.



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

Western Cape COVID-19 Hotline 080 928 4102 (tollfree)



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