

## WHAT SHOULD I DO TO CARE FOR THE BODY?

**After you've received permission from authorities to move the body**, you may move it from the location in which your loved one died to a more appropriate location, if possible. You may also want to isolate the body from other family members. You may consider caring for the body in the following manner to the extent that your religion or culture allows:

- Control the temperature in the home, keeping the temperature as cool as possible.
- Collect identification and personal documents for your loved one and maintain those documents for the coroner. The coroner will need this information to confirm identity and to complete a death certificate. Ideally, these documents should include the deceased's driver's license or other photo ID, personal documents such as a marriage license, birth certificate, insurance policies, or wills.
- If you move the body, after it has been masked, put something between the body and the surface to which the body is moved—a plastic tarp or plastic bag is ideal. You can make a shroud (covering) for the body by placing the body on a sheet or blanket (placed over the tarp). Bring the top of the sheet down over the head. Fold the bottom of the sheet up over the feet. Fold the sides of the sheet over the body. Secure the shroud in place with safety pins or tape. Attach identification to the shroud.

## HOW CAN I COPE WITH THE FEELINGS OF GRIEF AND LOSS?

Grief is a normal response that comes from the loss of someone or something important to you. Grief will last as long as it takes to accept your loss. This can range from a few days to many years. How you deal with sudden bereavement or the immediate loss of a loved one, family member, or caregiver will be different for every individual.

*Common reactions to grief may include:*

- Loss of interest in performing normal daily activities
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Inability to make rational decisions, trouble concentrating
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness and hopelessness
- Feelings of suicide
- A sense of fear and/or anxiety

*Suggestions to work through grief include:*

- Recognition that the reactions above are normal
- Acceptance that the grieving process will take time
- Work to accept the loss by discussing your feelings and concerns with surviving family members, caregivers or a professional counselor

## SOUTH CAROLINA PREPARES FOR PANDEMIC INFLUENZA



## CARING FOR THE DECEASED AT HOME

*This brochure provides basic information on how to care for a deceased love one in the home should a severe influenza pandemic occur.*



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## CARING FOR THE DECEASED AT HOME

One of the most unfortunate and certain aspects of a severe pandemic is an increase in deaths. This increase may be small or catastrophic, depending on whether the pandemic flu strain is severe or not. Even in a moderate pandemic, the coroner's office and mortuary services are likely to become overwhelmed. In this case, families may have to deal with the deaths of their loved ones on their own. State and local officials have planned for an influenza pandemic and will do everything they can to retrieve the body in a timely manner.

This brochure gives basic information that families can use if the pandemic is severe enough to delay the retrieval of a loved one's body from the home.

### HOW DO I KNOW IF MY LOVED ONE IS DEAD?

Check for a pulse over the artery in the neck by pressing lightly over the artery. This will take about 30 seconds. Put a hand on their chest to feel if the chest is rising, or a small mirror in front of the nose and mouth to determine if there is any exhaling. The pupils of their eyes will remain enlarged (fixed and dilated). After a small amount of time, the body will start to change from a normal complexion to a pale color.

### WHOM DO I CALL IF MY LOVED ONE IS DEAD?

Even if local emergency responders are overwhelmed, it is still important that you contact them as soon as possible and report any deaths. For any death in the home, the state must inquire into the circumstances of the death. Authorities will ask questions about the identity of the deceased and the circumstances surrounding the death. If you are certain that your loved one has died, call 9-1-1, your local, pre-identified funeral home or your local coroner's office.

If you are not certain that your loved one is dead, call 9-1-1. If you do not receive a response from your local EMS, you may also contact the coroner's office directly.

### WHAT SHOULD I DO TO PROTECT MYSELF AGAINST THE VIRUS?

Specific measures are not required for the handling of persons who died from influenza; the body is generally not contagious after death. However, the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control recommends using latex, rubber, vinyl – disposable or washable gloves in any handling of the deceased or his/her clothing.

It is also recommended that you place a mask on the face of the deceased to minimize the likelihood of exposure to the body's respiratory secretions, particularly if you move the body. A mask can be a surgical mask, or can be improvised with a handkerchief or towel.

Additionally, hand-washing and washing the clothes and bedding of the deceased are recommended.

You can also visit [www.scdhec.gov](http://www.scdhec.gov) to find more information on caring for persons sick with influenza.

