

## What Should be Done when a Loved One Dies?

The following are the specific Islamic rites honoring the deceased:

- 1) Closing the eyes of the deceased:** The Prophet (pbuh) said, “When a soul is seized, the eyesight follows it.”
- 2) Covering the deceased:** Covering the deceased is a way of respecting and preserving the dignity of the deceased.
- 3) Donation of organs:** Donate any organ or part of the body only if the deceased requested in his/her will and testament or is registered as a donor. Family members have no rights to donate organs or parts of the body without the prior consent of the deceased.
- 4) Arrangements for burial:** Family members may contact any Islamic funeral director in the area to handle the burial procedures including the funeral prayer and prepare for burial without delay.
- 5) Informing relatives and friends:** It is desirable to inform relatives, neighbors, friends and co-workers of the deceased about his or her death so that they may share in the reward of participating in the funeral prayer as well as praying for the deceased.
- 6) Washing the body:** The guardian of the deceased should wash, wrap and arrange for the funeral prayer prior to burial. The funeral director may assist in case the guardian is unable to do so.
- 7) Funeral prayer:** The funeral prayer or *salat al-Janazah* is a collective duty upon the Muslim community. The funeral prayer may be performed at a mosque or any public community hall. The prayer is led by a local Imam or preferably by the male guardian, son or any person the deceased may have designated.
- 8) Burial:** It is recommended to bury the deceased in the town where he or she dies. The deceased is to be buried in a Muslim cemetery unless one is unable to locate one. If circumstances allow, the deceased is placed in the grave on his/her right side facing the direction of Mecca, (*qibla*) where one directs his or her face in the daily prayers. After the grave is covered with dirt, an Imam, a Muslim chaplain, or a recognized pious person may lead the crowd in supplications (*dua*).
- 9) Weeping over the deceased:** Weeping over the deceased is permissible while wailing and shouting phrases, beating of chest and cheeks, tearing hair and clothes among other excessive actions are prohibited. The Prophet wept over his son Ibrahim (Abraham) at his death saying, “The eyes shed tears and the heart feels pain, but we utter only what pleases the Lord. O Ibrahim! We are aggrieved at your demise.”
- 10) Mourning:** It is generally accepted among the schools of thought that it is permissible for loved ones and relatives to mourn for a period of three days on the death of a near relative.

During such period the family of the deceased mourn, receive visitors and condolences. The mourning period for a widow, on the other hand, is extended to four months and ten days. This waiting period is called the *iddah* and it is mandated by God as it appears in the Quran. To learn more about mourning check with a local Imam or a Muslim chaplain.

**11) Execution of the will:** The family of the deceased may consult a lawyer if necessary, preferably a Muslim lawyer that understands the Islamic inheritance laws and may help in the execution of the deceased's will and testament.

**12) Visiting the grave:** Family members are requested to frequently visit the grave of the deceased and pray for him or her.

**13) Praying for the deceased:** Loved ones and dear friends of the deceased are requested to frequently pray to God to save the deceased from the torment of the grave and the difficulties of the hereafter.

End.