



Funerals and grieving during COVID-19

This factsheet outlines current restrictions to funerals due to COVID-19 and social distancing. It also provides alternatives to a traditional funeral and tips to consider during bereavement during this time. It is for family members who have been caring for someone with a serious illness who has recently died.

Funerals

Due to the COVID-19 and social distancing rules, the number of mourners at a funeral are restricted. Please check your state/territory rules for the maximum number of attendees. The rules around social distancing and funerals may change over time and travel restrictions may vary between states.

If the funeral is held at an indoor venue, the number of people who may attend may be further restricted due to the size of the room and social distancing requirements. The funeral director or person performing the ceremony may be able to tell you the number of people allowed for a designated space.



It may be difficult to decide who should be invited to attend the funeral in person. Try and talk to family and close friends about this in a calm way, considering factors like:



- whether the deceased person had expressed any views about who they would like at the funeral
- whether they are family
- the closeness of the relationship to the deceased
- how long they have known the deceased
- whether they have been close to the deceased recently
- how important it is to the person to attend in person
- whether they will be able to attend due to travel restrictions or health concerns.



As an alternative to attending the funeral in person, technology can be used to live stream the funeral to other people or to video the funeral and share it with others later. Other people may also like to send in a letter or comment to be read aloud at the funeral. The funeral director or person conducting the ceremony may be able to assist you to organise these options.

Due to COVID-19, good hygiene and social distancing should be encouraged amongst the funeral attendees. This includes:

- Washing hands frequently with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Coughing or sneezing into your elbow or using a tissue and disposing of it immediately
- Avoiding physical contact with others
- Staying at home if unwell.



In line with the policy of reduced large social gatherings, there are restrictions on the size of a get together following the funeral. Please check your own state/territory rules around social gatherings by going to your state Department of Health.

It is important to acknowledge that this may not be the funeral you had imagined for your partner, relative or friend. This is unfortunately out of your control. You can still try and tailor the funeral so that it is meaningful and comforting.

CarerHelp has some useful resources:

- [After the death](#)
- [What to do when someone dies](#)

What if the deceased had COVID-19?

If the person has died with COVID-19 then there will be additional guidelines on touching the body and hygiene that need to be followed.

Ensure that attendees are aware of these additional guidelines either by providing written information or asking the person

conducting the ceremony to inform attendees.

- Family members are still likely be able to view the body.
- Family members will be advised not to kiss the deceased.
- If family members touch the body they must wash their hands with soap and water immediately.



Gloves are not necessary unless there are visible body fluids present.

Grieving during COVID-19

Grief can be a very private affair and, in some ways, social distancing provides an opportunity for you to grieve without the pressure of interacting with others.

However, you may also find grieving will be more difficult without the physical presence or physical comfort of others. Families and close friends often gather together when a person dies. People visit more often, make endless cups of tea, go for walks together, and drop off food. So how do you support each other while being safe and ensuring social distance?

Remember that:

- The people in your household can offer each

other physical comfort.

- A small number of family and close friends are able to visit you at home to provide care and comfort (this may vary by state/territory).
- You are able to exercise (including walking) with friends and family.
- Phone calls and video calls can provide emotional support and help you feel close to others.
- People can continue to drop off food, cards, or small gifts to remind you that you are cared for. 
- You are able to reach out to your religious leader, general practitioner, and others to let them know you need more support.
- You can join an online grief support group or access telehealth services through the Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement (03 926 52100 – this is not a crisis service).
- You can call helplines for support including Lifeline (131 114) or Grief Line (1300 845 745).
- You can spend time going through photos and other special items that remind you of the person who has died. You can share some of these mementos online or by email to your family.
- You can create something that celebrates the person's life such as a photo book, a quilt, an artwork, or a piece of furniture.

CarerHelp has many other resources that may assist you at this time.

- [When grief doesn't go away factsheet](#)
- [Watch our videos on grief](#)
- [About grief factsheet](#)
- The Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement also has useful resources including ["my grief app"](#) and [COVID-19 specific factsheets](#).



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