PREPARATION OF BODY

CHEVRA KADISHA

Chevra Kadisha for Males and Females

There is a “holy society” (*chevra kadisha)* for males and a separate one for females.

CLEANING BEFORE TAHARA

Blood

Any blood should be wiped up and the cloth should be buried with the body.

Wet Cloth and Soap

The body is cleaned with a wet cloth and soap (if necessary).

TAHARA

No Tahara

A dead body that bleeds a lot, such as after being shot or in a car crash, does not get purification (*tahara*) by water.

Three Buckets of Water

A ritual purification is performed (“*tahara*”) by pouring three buckets of water over the body:
The body is stood up and water is poured from the head over the body. The subsequent buckets are poured before the previous ones are empty, so that the water from the subsequent bucket overlaps the water from the previous one.

Psukim

Certain lines from the *Torah* (*psukim)* are said during the purification.

DRESSING

Shrouds, Hat, Robe

The body—whether male or female--is wrapped in shrouds: shirt, pants, socks (or long pants with the feet sewn up), hat (women who covered their hair while alive get two hats), and robe (*kittel*) on top of all. The hat covers the face.

Talit

An adult male is wrapped in a *talit* but one of the *tzitziyot* is made invalid/*pasul*.

Child's Dressing

A child under *bar mitzva* or *bat mitzva* age also gets dressed the same way as an adult, except if less than 7 years old (consult a *rabbi* in that case).

Egg and Wine for Face of Dead Person

Some people have the custom of putting egg and wine on the face of a dead person, but this is not *halacha*.

POSITIONING

Arms on Sides, Hands Open

The body is placed lying on its back, with arms on the sides and hands open.

Note on Christian Hospitals

In many Christian hospitals, as soon as a person dies, the arms are put in the shape of a cross. After *rigor mortis*, it is very difficult to move the arms, so if the arms were crossed, they should be uncrossed as soon as possible.

Feet First

The body is removed from the building feet first. (This is a non-binding custom, not a *halacha*.)

IN THE PRESENCE OF THE BODY

Lighted Candle Near Head of Dead Person

It is customary to place a lighted candle near the head of a dead person.

Put Dead Body on Floor

It is customary to put a dead body on the floor, if possible.

Shomer To Honor Dead Person

A "watcher" (*shomer*) should stay with a dead body at all times until the burial, if possible, to honor the dead person. The watcher should be close enough to be able to see the body. A non-Jew may be a watcher, but only *b'di'avad*.

NOTE If the body is being shipped somewhere, it is preferable that a *shomer* stay with the body, but it is not required.

Shomer for Several Days

When a person dies on *Shabbat* or a *Jewish festival*, a watcher (*shomer*) should still be present until burial, even if there will be a delay of several days.

Woman Shomeret

A woman may be a watcher (*shomeret)* for a dead person.

NOTE Either gender may watch the other, but the custom is to have the same gender where possible.

Eating in Room with Body

Don't eat in a room in which there is a dead body**.**

FROM FUNERAL HOME TO CEMETERY

Offspring at Funeral

Attending a funeral is a *mitzva*--that of honoring the dead person--but in attending a parent's funeral, there is the added *mitzva* of honoring a parent.

Adult (at least *bar mitzva* or *bat mitzva*) offspring should attend their parent's funeral, unless there is a financial, health, or other significant reason not to attend. There is no requirement for minor offspring to attend a funeral for a parent. *RMH* recommends consulting a *rabbi* before having a minor go to any funeral, including for the child's parent.

NOTE If both parents are still alive, it is not customary to go to the cemetery for any funeral except for a close relative, but it is a *mitzva* to attend the eulogies and ceremony beforehand.

Accompanying the Body: Jerusalem

In Jerusalem, *charedim* do not allow sons of a dead father to attend their father's funeral (from the funeral home to the cemetery).

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