



COVID- 19 (novel coronavirus) End of Life Care Information for Aged Residential Care AFTER DEATH CARE

Most residents will remain within their facility and a dedicated supportive environment for those who are dying is essential. Follow your organisational policy regarding after death care and use PPE when caring for the deceased person. It is recommended by the Ministry of Health that the risk of transmission from handling the body of a deceased person who has had or was suspected of having COVID-19 is low. However it is recommended that health care staff should continue to follow contact and droplet precautions and place the deceased person in a leak proof bag. Funeral Directors will guide you in terms of collecting a person from your facility as different organisations may have different policies regarding handling and collecting a person suspected of/or positively identified as having COVID-19. Follow MOH requirements for reporting.

Verification of Death

Verification of death is established through clinical assessment for the absence of signs of life. Death can be verified by health practitioners, including medical practitioners, nurse practitioners, midwives, registered nurses, emergency medical technicians, paramedics. Verification of death does not have any legal status, does not require any opinion as to the cause of death and does not constitute authority for a body to be buried or cremated.

Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD)

The Medical Certificate of Cause of Death is a legal document which can only be completed by a medical practitioner or a nurse practitioner and records:

- Full details of the deceased
- The circumstances of and cause of death
- Section 46B of the Burials and Cremation Act 1964 requires that a MCCD is issued by a medical practitioner or nurse practitioner within 24 hours of the medical practitioner or nurse practitioner learning of the death, provided they are satisfied that the cause of death was a result of an illness and is not otherwise reportable.

The most appropriate medical practitioner or nurse practitioner to complete the medical certificate of the cause of death is the medical practitioner or nurse practitioner who attended the person, who has sufficient knowledge of the person, including their past medical history, and nature of illness. However there is no provision in the act that requires a medical practitioner or a nurse practitioner to have seen a person within a specific time frame before being able to certify death. The medical practitioner or nurse practitioner does not have to examine the body before providing the MCCD unless cremation is planned.

If the usual medical practitioner or nurse practitioner is unavailable then the MCCD may be done by an alternate medical practitioner or nurse practitioner. That person must look at the medical records made by the medical practitioner or the nurse practitioner who last attended the person during the illness, and consider the circumstances of the person's death, and examine the body.