

Your guide to bereavement

Information for relatives and
carers

Please accept our condolences on the death of your loved one. We understand that this is an upsetting time for you, but hope that this booklet will help you with some of the necessary processes and formalities.

Next steps: the patient affairs office

You will need to make an appointment to come and see one of the patient affairs officers at the hospital where your loved one died.

The patient affairs officers are able to help you:

- collect your loved one's belongings or you can pick up them up from the patient affairs office. You may like to bring a small bag or suitcase for them
- by providing details of funeral directors, social services and other useful organisations
- collect the doctor's Cause of Death Certificate. You will need to have this when registering the death at the registrar's office
- by providing information and advice about registering the death, which must be done within five working days of when the person passed away. This can be done at any registrar's office in the country. However, funeral arrangements may have to be delayed if you are unable to attend the registrar's office in the area where the death occurred. This is because the certificate for the funeral director and for social services would have to be posted to you from the local registrar's office.

Please do not hesitate to talk to the patient affairs officer if you have any concerns. **Remember - we are here to help you.**

Patient affairs office locations

At **Charing Cross Hospital**, you can find the patient affairs office on the ground floor of the east wing. The office is open from 09.00 - 16.00, Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays).

Please contact us to make an appointment either by telephoning **020 3311 1098** or by telephoning the hospital switchboard on **020 3311 1234** and asking for bleep 1098.

Email: imperial.patient.affairs.hh@nhs.net

For **Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea hospitals**, you can find the patient affairs office on the ground floor of the south administration block at Hammersmith Hospital. The office is open from 09.00 - 16.00, Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays).

Please contact us to make an appointment either by telephoning **020 3313 3075** or by telephoning the hospital switchboard on **020 3313 1000** and asking for bleep 9140.

Email: imperial.patient.affairs.hh@nhs.net

For **St Mary's and Western Eye hospitals**, you can find the patient affairs office on the ground floor of the Cambridge wing at St Mary's Hospital. The office is open from 09.00 - 16.00, Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays).

Please contact us to make an appointment either by telephoning **020 3312 1232** or by telephoning the hospital switchboard on **020 3312 6666** and asking for patient affairs.

Email: imperial.patient.affairs.hh@nhs.net

Registering the death

When you go to the registrar's office to do this, they will ask you for the following information about your loved one:

- date and place of death
- full name and surname (including maiden name if applicable)
- date and place of birth
- occupation
- full address
- date of birth of the surviving husband or wife (if applicable)

How do I contact local registry offices?

For Charing Cross, Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea hospitals contact:

Hammersmith & Fulham Register Office

The Clockwork Building
45 Beaver Lane
Hammersmith
London
W6 9AR

Please ring for an appointment on 020 8753 2140

Opening hours: 09.00 - 16.30, Monday to Friday (except the last Thursday of each month)

www.lbhf.gov.uk/registrars

For St Mary's and Western Eye hospitals contact:

Westminster Register Office

The Register Office
317 Harrow Road
London W9 3RJ

Please ring for an appointment on 020 7641 7500

Opening hours: 08.45 - 16.45, Monday to Friday (except the first Thursday of each month)

www.westminster.gov.uk/births-and-deaths

Patient affairs officers will advise you on how to get to the appropriate register office.

The coroner

The coroner is medically and legally trained to identify the cause of death and how, when and where someone died. If the death is unexpected or if a person dies before reaching hospital, this must be reported to the coroner within 24 hours.

In these circumstances, the coroner may need to give their permission before you can see the body. They may also decide that a post-mortem is necessary before the Cause of Death Certificate can be issued.

Everything possible will be done to ensure that this process is carried out quickly and observes religious or cultural traditions.

What do I need to know about a post-mortem?

A post-mortem examination (also known as an autopsy or necropsy) may help the doctor to establish why your loved one died. It may also provide information that may be useful in the future treatment of patients with similar illnesses.

We will ask for your written permission for a post-mortem to be carried out. This examination is not compulsory (unless requested by a coroner) and you are free to withhold your consent.

The doctors will be happy to let you know the results of the post-mortem, so please tell them if you would like to know.

Please note: the cause of death as stated on the death certificate will not change. Please remember that the death certificate is issued on the information available leading up to your loved one's death. The post-mortem may give different information. If you request details about the result of the post-mortem, then any difference between the death certificate and subsequent information will become apparent. If you have any concerns, please discuss them with the patient affairs officer, who can arrange for you to speak to the doctor.

Support groups

When someone we care about dies it is normal to grieve. Grief affects us differently and we may experience a variety of emotions and feelings that range from:

- intense longing for the person who has died
- numbness

-
- bouts of crying or perhaps being unable to cry at all
 - guilt about things we did or didn't do when the person was alive
 - difficulty concentrating
 - being forgetful
 - difficulty sleeping
 - loss of appetite

You may also become very tired as you find yourself having to deal with tasks that are new and unfamiliar to you that are connected to losing a loved one. There is no right or wrong way to grieve. Please remember we all grieve in our own way.

Children have their own needs and no child is too young not to notice that an important person is not around. Try not to exclude children and tell them in simple language that the person they loved has died and is not coming back. You can contact a charity called Winston's Wish (details on page 8), which offers practical support and guidance for bereaved children, young people and their families.

Some people find they do not have others to turn to at this time or they are worried how others around them are coping. Sometimes it can be helpful to talk things over with someone outside of our circle of family and friends. **If you would like to speak to someone or need help or advice please contact your GP.** On the next page is a list of organisations that may also be able to offer you help.

- **CRUSE Bereavement Care**

Helpline: 0808 808 1677

www.cruse.org.uk

www.hopeagain.org.uk (Cruse Bereavement Care's website for young people)

Email: hopeagain@cruse.org.uk

- **Samaritans**

Telephone: 116 123

www.samaritans.org.uk

- **Bereavement Advice Centre**

Telephone: 0800 634 9494

www.bereavementadvice.org

- **Winston's Wish** – practical support and guidance for bereaved children, young people and their families

Telephone: 08088 020 021

www.winstonswish.org.uk

Registering concerns

We aim to provide the best care for our patients. Please let us know if you want to discuss any concerns or outstanding questions you may have about the care of your loved one. The patient advice and liaison service (PALS) provides confidential advice, information and support for patients, relatives and carers.

The PALS team will:

- **actively listen and respond** to compliments, concerns, suggestions or queries and liaise with staff on your behalf

-
- **support** you through an anxious time as a patient, relative or friend
 - **help** the Trust learn from patient's, relative's and carer's experiences and comments

How to contact the PALS team

For **Charing Cross, Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea hospitals** please telephone **020 3313 0088**.

For **St Mary's and Western Eye hospitals** please telephone **020 3312 7777**.

You can also **email** PALS at imperial.pals@nhs.net

Alternatively, you may wish to express your concerns in **writing** to:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street, London W2 1NY

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team: imperial.communications@nhs.net

Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: www.imperial.nhs.uk

