

Embalming: Your questions answered

Provided by

Freeman Brothers

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DIRECTORS SINCE 1855
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This leaflet is designed to answer some basic questions you may have about embalming (which is also known as 'hygienic treatment'), to enable you to consent to this procedure being carried out.

What is embalming?

Embalming is a process which preserves the body, because it delays the natural breakdown of our cells, which starts to happen after we die.

Why would someone be embalmed?

Embalming has three aims. 1- Presentation: to improve their appearance for when people wish to visit them in the Chapel of Rest or have a funeral with an open coffin. 2- Preservation: to lengthen the amount of time before a body's natural processes begin. 3- Sanitisation: to remove from the body any bacteria or other agents which might cause it to break down more quickly or be unsafe for others to be in contact with.

What happens when someone is embalmed?

The body's natural fluids are removed, and replaced with a carefully-mixed combination of chemicals which have the effect of slowing down the natural processes that take place after death, and also restores a more peaceful appearance to the person who has died. This will usually take place as part of the overall care that the person receives in preparation for their funeral- being washed and dressed and- if requested- shaved and any provided make-up applied, before they are placed in their coffin.

Why might a body be embalmed?

At Freeman Brothers, we embalm people when there has been a wish expressed that they are to be visited in our Chapel of Rest, because we hope that by doing so, those who come to see the person who has died might find their appearance improved in comparison to if the procedure had not been carried out, and that it also may lengthen the duration during which people are able to visit, although we still suggest that this happens as soon as is practical.

Are there any situations when embalming is not carried out?

Yes. Some religious denominations do not allow a person to be embalmed. Also, if a person is being buried in a natural burial ground, they will request that embalming does not take place.

Who will carry out the embalming?

At Freeman Brothers, we employ two embalmers- Vicky, who is based at our Holly Lodge, Crawley, branch and also arranges funerals; and Fizzy, who is based in Horsham and works part-time in our mortuary there. Both Vicky and Fizzy have undergone extensive professional training to qualify as embalmers and both are members of the British Institute of Embalming, their professional body, which ensures they remain updated on developments in the industry.

What happens if I do not consent to the embalming?

We will prepare the person who has died for their funeral without embalming them, but we would encourage anyone who wishes to visit the Chapel of Rest to do so as early as possible. We look after every person in our care in refrigerated storage but can only do so much about their condition without them being embalmed.

I'm still not sure, what happens next?

We would suggest you contact us with a view to arranging a conversation with Vicky or Fizzy, as they can answer your questions in more detail and help you with your decision.