

BUDDHIST DEATH & DYING

December 2014

PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES

1. Buddhist Views and Beliefs Concerning Death

“Buddhism follows the basic tenet that rebirth is an existing reality. Death is regarded as the actual time of movement from one life to another.” (Multifaith Information Manual, p. 17.)

- We believe that consciousness lingers and the patients still have feelings and that is why the body should not be moved.
- Although it is important to not move the body at the time of death, it is more important to encourage a kind heart, which means allowing the next patient to receive the appropriate healthcare services, and who may be in need of emergency care. These good actions can help the deceased promote an auspicious human rebirth in the next life, as well as preventing lower forms of rebirth from taking place.
- It is important that a Buddhist clergy be notified well in advance in order for them to preside over the care of a dying person.
- Quiet place is essential.
- Do not touch the body if at all possible.
- No loud demonstrations of emotion.
- Eating and drinking in the deceased person’s room is allowed. Refrain from eating meat is recommended as standard tradition.
- The Theravada tradition takes a different approach, and they are free to move the body right away but one must understand that touching the dead body is improper due to hygienic reasons.

2. What To Do Before Death

- Prepare the family for anticipated death.
- If possible, transfer the patient to a hospice or palliative care setting.
- Have the Buddhist clergy come to be with the family and offer supportive prayers.
- If the family have their own clergy, they should be notified so that no delay in arrival takes place as prayers should be started as soon as possible.
- If the family clergy are unavailable please ask for alternative clergy to attend.

3. Immediately After Death Has Occurred

- If possible move the patient directly to the Bereavement Room before prayers/chanting begins and inform the family they can stay with the body longer (4 - 6 hours).
- If the family insist on not moving the body and wish to stay in the same room – then a total of 3 hours is sufficient in a hospital setting with 1 hour total of chanting and praying being sufficient after the death and then if necessary the body may be moved to the morgue.



**NORTH
YORK
GENERAL**

*Making a World
of Difference*

- Start chanting immediately upon decision of where chanting will take place– family and Buddhist clergy to begin prayers.
- Family members need to stay with the deceased loved one.
- Decisions should be made by the most responsible adult in the family.
- Small children should not be left alone in the room or alone with the clergy who are busy with religious practices.
- Complimentary chanting machines are available through Spiritual & Religious Care.
- It is not recommended to place any Buddhist sheets over the body due to infection prevention and control.

4. Funeral Homes

- Please advise the family to call their own funeral home and if they don't have one, please print the Funeral Home list from the Spiritual & Religious Care webpage.
- It is recommended that the family be advised that the body should be moved to the funeral home within a day or two, and once moved to the funeral home they can decide on the most appropriate date and time for the service.

Approved by Rev. Yen Jen Sik, Buddhist Po Chi Centre