



# COVID-19 GUIDANCE

## Faith leaders: Safe burial practice [07-20]

This material has been adapted from the World Health Organization's guidance for [Faith-based organisations and faith leaders](#).

**Government and public health authorities at both local and national levels are the primary source of information and guidance about Covid-19** in communities. They can provide information about locally mandated restrictions on the movement of people, and about whether gatherings are permitted and, if so, what size of gathering is allowed. Those organising a gathering should comply with this official guidance.

Faith leaders can help grieving families to ensure that loved ones who have died receive respectful, appropriate funerals and burial rites, even in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. Knowing how to safely plan and perform funeral rituals and services can comfort mourners, show respect for those who have died and protect people from infection.

*When acceptable or appropriate according to respective faith traditions, embalming, burial, and cremation should be allowed for the remains of persons who have died of Covid-19.*

### World Health Organization

Religious leaders and local religious communities can work with families to integrate appropriate religious and cultural practices with burial and funeral steps that reduce the chances of infection. For example:

- If washing the body or shrouding are part of faith traditions, people conducting these rites should wear disposable gloves at the very least. If splashing of body fluids is possible, additional personal protective equipment may be required for those taking part in the ritual (such as disposable gowns, face shields or goggles, and medical masks).
- If the family of the deceased wishes to view the body after it is removed from the medical facility where they died, they may be allowed to do so, in accordance with local physical distancing restrictions. But there should be no touching or kissing of the body and they should wash hands thoroughly before and after the viewing.
- Particular attention should be paid to protecting children and older adults who attend burials and funerals.

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