POSTMORTEM CARE POLICY

Policy serves as a general guideline for postmortem care. With our goal to compassionately support families at difficult times when a loss has occurred the outlined simple steps will ensure our families' loved ones are treated with the same dignity and respect that we would provide our own family.

1. Gather Supplies – gloves, gauze, towels, soap, room deodorizers
2. Close the eyes
   a. Use gentle pressure with thumb to hold decedent’s eyes in closed position.
   b. Consider using a Q-Tip moistened with Vaseline or ointment along the eye line to provide a bit of tact to secure the eyelids gently closed if pressure does not work.
3. Close the mouth – denture care
   a. Use glycerol swabs or toothettes to cleanse the mouth.
   b. If the decedent has dentures clean and rinse the dentures. If possible put them back in decedent’s mouth.
   c. Wash the exterior area of the mouth with a wash cloth.
   d. Utilize the same method of eye closure with the mouth by applying a small amount of Vaseline or ointment on the lips to provide tact to hold the mouth closed.
   e. If you cannot get a natural mouth closure, you may roll up a washcloth and place it under the chin to secure the jaw.
4. Wash the body / Comb hair
   a. Pay particular attention to the face and hands as they are most visible.
5. Change the bedding
   a. This may be difficult with the deceased in bed so this may simply be providing care to the peri area as needed and changing the top sheet.
6. Position the body
   a. If possible raise the head of the bed slightly and position the pillow so the decedent appears to be in a comfortable position.
   b. You may have to bring the sheet up to just under the deceased chin if you secured the jaw closure with a rolled washcloth.
   c. The best appearance is with the crisp clean sheet tucked just under the arms with the arms and hands exposed. Many families want to touch the hand of their loved one before they are transported into the care of the mortuary.
7. Remove lines
   a. If the coroner has cleared the individual or if the individual was under hospice care, the lines can be removed.
   b. Oxygen can be removed.
   c. Catheter can be removed or repositioned to the side of the bed not visible to the family.
   d. IV lines if authorized, may be removed.
   e. Feeding tubes, trachs or any surgically placed tube should be left for the funeral home to remove.
8. Environmental check
   a. Look for soiled linen, trash cans that need to be emptied etc. We want the room to look as comfortable and welcoming as possible.
b. Put the visitor side of the bedrail down to remove the barrier.

c. Bring in additional chairs to accommodate family.

d. Place some tissue and perhaps some bottled waters nearby.

9. Document

a. Secure and document valuables, create a chain of custody.

b. Document postmortem care provided.