

Who issues the death certificate?

The Registrar of Deaths issues a death certificate when the Coroner has issued a Coroner's certificate.

On receipt of the final post mortem examination report, the Coroner considers if an inquest needs to be held. If the Coroner decides that an inquest is not necessary, the Register of Deaths is notified, the death is registered and a death certificate is issued. If an inquest is ordered, registration of the death is delayed while the Coroner conducts enquiries.

On request, the Coroner's office will issue you with an **interim death certificate**. This interim certificate is acceptable to the Department of Social Protection for bereavement grants and other benefits.

Who is my contact in the hospital?

A Bereavement Social Worker based in the Social Work Department is your hospital link throughout the post mortem process.

The Bereavement Social Worker will make contact with you when a post mortem examination has been ordered by the Coroner. They will provide you with information about the post mortem process, offer support to you and your family, and will address any questions you may have.

The Bereavement Social Worker can also provide you with information regarding community based bereavement support services.

For support or further information contact the Bereavement Social Worker:
Telephone: 01 803 2406

Further Information

www.coroners.ie
and
www.dublincoronerscourt.ie

Contact Telephone Numbers:

Dublin District Coroner's Court office
Store Street, Dublin 1
Telephone: (01) 874 6684 or (01) 874 3006
(Monday to Friday)
Email: dublincoroner@justice.ie
visit: www.dublincoronerscourt.ie

Mater Hospital Mortuary
Telephone: (01) 803 2441 or (01) 803 2542
(Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm)
Or bleep the Mortuary Staff by contacting the
Switchboard 01 803 2000
and ask for Bleep 2441 or Bleep 2542

Social Work Department
Telephone (01) 803 2406 or (01) 803 2267
(Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm)

We endeavor to provide the highest standard of end of life care for our patients and their families.

If you would like to provide us with feedback on your experience, please contact our

Patient Services Department.
Phone: (01) 8032206 Email: patientservices@mater.ie



Mater Misericordiae University Hospital
Eccles Street, Dublin 7
Telephone (01) 803 2000
Web: www.mater.ie



Mater Misericordiae University Hospital



Coroner's Post Mortem Examination A Brief Guide

Tús Áite do
Shábháilteacht 1 Othar
Patient Safety First



Coroner's Post Mortem - A Brief Overview for Relatives and Friends



Introduction

We wish to extend our sincere sympathy to you on your bereavement. This leaflet is intended to help you understand and address some questions you may have about a Coroner's Post Mortem.

Who is the Coroner?

The Coroner is an independent office holder with responsibility under the law for the medical / legal investigation of certain deaths.

A Coroner must inquire into the circumstances of sudden, unexplained, violent and unnatural deaths. This may require a full post mortem examination, sometimes followed by an inquest. The Coroner's inquiry will establish whether death was due to natural or unnatural causes. If death is due to unnatural causes then an inquest must be held by law.

Who has responsibility to report a death to the Coroner?

In a case of sudden, unnatural or violent death there is a legal responsibility on the doctor, registrar of deaths, funeral undertaker, householder and every person in charge of any institution or premises in which the deceased person was residing at the time of death, to inform the Coroner. The death may be reported to a Garda Síochána Sergeant who will notify the Coroner.

However, any person may notify the Coroner of the circumstances of a particular death.

What happens when a death is reported to the Coroner?

Deaths occurring under a wide range of conditions must be reported to the Coroner who then makes inquiries into the circumstances of the death. Sometimes a doctor may be in a position to certify the cause of death. If this is so, and if there are no other circumstances requiring investigation, the Coroner will permit the doctor to complete a medical certificate of the cause of death, and the death will be registered accordingly.

However, if the certificate cannot be completed the Coroner will order that a post mortem examination be carried out.

Who helps the Coroner?

The Gardaí collect information to assist the Coroner. In the case of a Coroner's post mortem examination a formal identification of the body is required. A member of the Garda Síochána will act for the Coroner in such cases and will arrange a formal identification of the body. This is normally carried out by a member of the deceased person's family (family members are not compelled to view the body against their wishes).

Formal identification may take place in an Emergency Department, hospital ward or may involve attendance at the mortuary to identify the deceased person's body to the Garda. The fact that relatives may be met at the hospital by a uniformed Garda or that a Garda may call to the home to take a statement does not mean that the death is regarded as suspicious.

What is a post mortem?

A post mortem is a special medical examination of the body carried out by a specially trained doctor i.e. a Pathologist. Small tissue samples are routinely retained for detailed laboratory examination and diagnostic purposes in the context of establishing the cause of death. Occasionally, organs may be retained for further examination. In such cases, the relative will be informed as soon as possible that this has happened and the organ will be returned for burial or cremation, by arrangement, once the examination has concluded. In carrying out this examination, there is no disfigurement of the body (or further disfigurement of the body), which may be viewed afterwards, in the same manner, as if no post mortem had been performed.

Consent is not required for a Coroner's post mortem examination. A senior member of staff will inform you why the death was reportable to the Coroner, the role of the

Coroner and information about the Coroner's post mortem examination (including the possibility of the retention of organs).

Release for burial or cremation

Coroner's make every effort to release the body of the deceased person for burial / cremation without any undue delay.

We advise you to contact your funeral director as early as possible. The funeral director will guide you through the next steps and contact the Dublin District Coroner's office and advise you of the date and time of the release of the body of the deceased person.

Funeral arrangements should not be made until you have been told the date and time of the release of the body of the deceased person.

Will the family be able to find out the results of the Coroner's post mortem examination?

When the Coroner decides that a post mortem examination is required, the Pathologist will be asked to carry out the examination. The Pathologist will report all findings to the Coroner. In these circumstances the Pathologist acts for the Coroner and is independent of the hospital, therefore any enquiries concerning the post mortem examination report can be only be gained from the Coroner. It should also be noted that depending on the circumstances of the case and whether further ancillary testing is required, it can take a minimum of six months for the report to be finalised.