

The First Hour After Death: Tradition-Specific Checklist

For charge nurses and on-call providers. Before touching the body—pause. Ask: "Are there any religious or cultural practices we need to follow right now?"

Christianity

FLEXIBLE

DO:

- Allow family time and privacy to pray at bedside
- Facilitate clergy or chaplain visit if requested
- Catholic: contact priest if Last Rites not yet given
- Confirm burial vs cremation preference with family
- Note: Orthodox/some Catholic prefer burial

DO NOT:

- Do not rush family from the room

Islam

URGENT

DO:

- Notify family IMMEDIATELY — do not delay
- Gloves on before non-Muslim staff touch body
- Close eyes and mouth; turn head to right shoulder
- Do not remove IV lines before family arrives
- Contact family re: ghusl (washing) and kafan

DO NOT:

- NO cremation under any circumstance
- NO autopsy unless legally required
- Do not delay — burial within 24 hrs is obligatory

Judaism

URGENT

DO:

- Do NOT leave body alone — arrange shomer NOW
- Contact family; ask about chevra kadisha
- Close eyes; straighten body; cover with sheet
- Check Shabbat/holiday timing for burial
- Coordinate shiva support from this moment

DO NOT:

- NO cremation (Orthodox/Conservative — ask Reform)
- NO autopsy unless legally required

Hinduism

PROMPT

DO:

- Notify family immediately
- Ask about tulsi leaves or Ganga jal placement
- Facilitate pandit (priest) visit if requested
- Allow family to wash and dress body
- Support eldest son's role in cremation process

DO NOT:

- Do not remove sacred items without asking
- Do not discard tulsi or sacred water as refuse

Buddhism

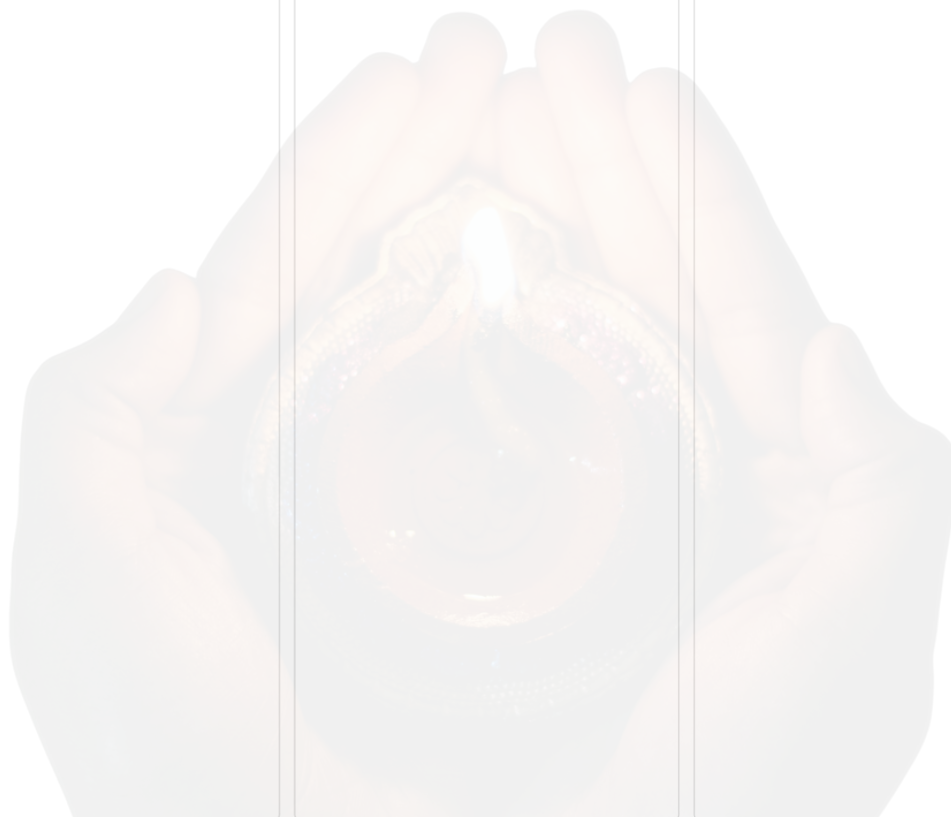
ASK FAMILY

DO:

- ASK family before touching or moving body
- Maintain quiet, calm environment
- Facilitate monk or teacher visit if requested
- Allow chanting or prayer without interruption

DO NOT:

- Do NOT move body without explicit family permission
- Consciousness may linger — do not rush



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■ Sikhism

PROMPT

DO:

- Leave all five Ks in place — do not remove any
- Facilitate Ardas (prayer) by family or Granthi
- Family will wash and dress body before cremation

DO NOT:

- NEVER cut or trim kesh (hair) — ever
- Do not remove kara (bracelet) without consent

■ Indigenous / Native

ASK FAMILY

DO:

- Ask family: 'What do you need right now?'
- Facilitate traditional healer or spiritual leader
- Provide space and time with the body
- Ask before speaking deceased's name (some nations)

DO NOT:

- Do not remove medicine bundles or sacred objects
- Never assume — 500+ nations, each is different

■ Jehovah's Witnesses

FLEXIBLE

DO:

- Standard post-mortem care unless directed otherwise
- Welcome congregation elders if family requests
- Burial or cremation both acceptable

DO NOT:

- Blood product restrictions remain in effect

■ Afro-Caribbean / ATR

ASK FAMILY

DO:

- Ask who should be contacted — spiritual leader may be needed
- Provide space and time for family and community
- Allow extended time with the body
- Ask early about burial or preparation preferences

DO NOT:

- Do not remove ritual objects or altar items
- Do not dismiss spiritual interpretation of events