

What is an autopsy?

An autopsy is a step-by-step examination of the outside of the body and internal organs of a deceased patient by a doctor called a pathologist. The autopsy is carried out in a respectful manner and with regard to the wishes of the patient's next-of-kin.

Why do it?

- An autopsy will provide detailed information about what caused a patient's death.
- Even if the cause seems clear, the patient may have had medical problems that were not known during life.
- This information can be important for the health of other family members in the future.
- Sometimes, it can also help loved ones find closure or come to terms with the death.

Contact the Autopsy Office

Strong Memorial Hospital
601 Elmwood Ave. Box 626
(585) 275-3202



Explaining Autopsy

Learn about options available to patients and families at Strong Memorial Hospital.



Frequently Asked Questions

What can an autopsy show?

- Provides a medical opinion about immediate and underlying causes of death.
- Can confirm a medical finding or reveal other causes of illness.
- May detect some inherited diseases.

Who can give permission for a hospital autopsy?

New York State law states that only a patient's legal next-of-kin(s) may provide consent for a hospital autopsy. The order of priority for giving consent is as follows:

1. Spouse
2. Domestic partner
3. Child over the age of 18
4. Grandchild over the age of 18
5. Parent
6. Sibling over the age of 18
7. Other relative over the age of 18 (e.g., grandparent, niece, nephew)

Note: Power of Attorney and Health Care Agent status ceases at death.

When is an autopsy conducted?

- Typically within 24 to 48 hours of death.
- The procedure is scheduled after a completed "Authorization for Autopsy Report of Death" form is received.

What does an autopsy cost?

- *There is NO cost* for an autopsy if the patient was *ever* seen at Strong Memorial Hospital or affiliated facilities.
- Cost of a private autopsy for non-affiliated patients is handled on case-by-case basis.

How long does an autopsy take?

- Initial examination typically takes between two and four hours.
- Time depends on the type of disease, whether there are limitations to the autopsy, and the goal of the autopsy.
- Additional studies also may be performed to identify possible infections, etc.

How long before results are available?

- Preliminary reports are usually available to the doctor who was in charge of the patient's care within two business days.
- Final autopsy reports are typically completed within 60 business days.
- Complex cases may take longer.
- This timeline is the same for non-affiliated patients requesting a private autopsy.

Who receives the autopsy reports?

- The doctor in charge of the patient's care receives a copy. Next of kin can also designate a doctor of their choice (i.e. family physician) to receive a copy.

- Next of kin can request a paper copy of the report in either of the following ways:
 1. Call Health Information Management at (585) 275-2605 and complete a written request.
 2. Request a copy directly from a doctor who is receiving one.

Who will explain the findings of my loved one's autopsy to our family?

- Next of kin may directly contact either the patient's doctor or a physician whom they designated to receive a copy of the report to meet and go over the results.

Will an autopsy interfere with the viewing?

- You can hold a normal viewing for your loved one after they have had an autopsy.
- Incisions made for the procedure are covered by regular clothing and positioning of the body.

Learn More

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(585) 275-3202

www.Autopsy.urmc.edu