

Viewing The Body

Adults may feel that children will be scared if they see a dead person, but for some children it can be helpful, particularly if they haven't been able to say goodbye to the person before the death. It is important to be guided by what the children want and to give them information that will help them make their decision. For this reason it can be helpful for you, or a member of the family, to have already viewed the body.

If you are unsure what to expect, you could speak to medical staff or the funeral directors. It is helpful for children to know:

- Who will come with them
- Where the dead person will be (e.g. in a coffin at the chapel of rest, in a bed at home, in hospital). A description of what the room is like can be very reassuring.
- What the dead person will look like. Explain that they will be very cold and pale, and that they won't be able to react in any way. If their face is marked in any way, children should be prepared for that. They should also be told that the person's eyes will be closed.
- That they may be able to touch the person if they want to, but that they do not have to.
- They can take a letter, picture, poem or object with them to leave in the coffin.
- They can change their minds at the last moment and choose not to go into the room.

It is important that children know that there are other ways to say goodbye if they don't want to see the body. For example, they can visit a special place or you can leave something on their behalf.

Afterwards allow plenty of time for children to ask questions and talk about how they feel. The reaction may not be immediate, so be prepared to talk whenever they are ready.