

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّآ إِلَيْهِ رَٰجِعُونَ

Innā lillāhi wa innā ilayhi rājiʿūn. Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return. Qurʾān, al-Baqarah 2:156

We are sorry. Here is what happens next.

As soon as you can, call your masjid's funeral committee.

They will arrange the washing, the shroud, the prayer and the burial, and tell you which funeral director to use.

You do not have to do this alone, or all at once. Your masjid has done this many times. Follow the steps in order, and open each one when you reach it.

New This guide is new and has not yet been reviewed by people in New Zealand. If something here is wrong or out of date where you live, please tell us at hello@lifeistemporary.com.

WHAT THE LAW SAYS IN NEW ZEALAND

Registering the death

The death is registered with Births, Deaths and Marriages after the burial, within 3 working days of it. A funeral director usually does this. If you arrange the burial yourself, you register it on form BDM28 with the cause of death certificate or the coroner's authorisation. Registration is free. govt.nz, Registering a death (updated 22 May 2024); Department of Internal Affairs, form BDM28

The coroner and post-mortems

Police tell a coroner about unexpected, violent or suspicious deaths. Close family can object to a post-mortem within 24 hours of the coroner's decision, unless the death was part of a crime or a delay would stop the pathologist finding the cause, and can then apply to the High Court within 48 hours of being told the coroner has decided to go ahead. The coroner must consider the distress to people whose beliefs require the body back quickly, and can order an immediate post-mortem for that reason. Coroners Court, objection page (updated 28 March 2017); Coroners Court home page; Coroners Act 2006, ss. 32, 33 and 37

Release, timing and repatriation

We found no national minimum or maximum time for burial, so ask the cemetery the earliest time it can bury. The first stages of a coroner's case often take 48 hours. For a burial abroad, the registration form records the place abroad and the date the body leaves New Zealand; ask the funeral director and the embassy about the rest. Coroners Court, First stages (updated 7 May 2025); Department of Internal Affairs, form BDM28

Burial and cemeteries

Each cemetery has its own rules. Some council cemeteries have Muslim areas, such as Christchurch's Memorial Park Cemetery and Ashburton Cemetery. In Ashburton's Muslim area the body is laid on its right side facing Mecca, with a wooden board over it. We found no national rule on burial without a coffin, so ask the cemetery. Ashburton District Council, Burial Services; Christchurch City Council, Operational cemeteries

Probate and the estate	The High Court grants probate to the executor, or letters of administration if there is no will. It usually takes 6 to 8 weeks, and the fee can sometimes be waived. Family members can challenge a will or claim on the estate in court, so ask a lawyer before dividing it by the Islamic shares. govt.nz, Wills, probate and estates
Small estates	If the estate is worth less than $40,000, you may not need to apply to the High Court. The bank can release money from the deceased's account for the funeral without probate, and you do not need to be the executor. govt.nz, Wills, probate and estates; What to do when someone dies (updated 14 August 2026)
Funeral Grant and help with costs	Work and Income's Funeral Grant pays up to $2,697.43 towards reasonable funeral costs when the estate cannot pay, if the person who died normally lived in New Zealand; you do not need to be on a benefit, and for a partner or child it depends on your income. ACC helps with burial costs after an accident. Work and Income, Funeral Grant; govt.nz, Financial help if someone dies (updated 2 July 2026)

From official sources, checked October 2026. Laws change; your funeral director and a lawyer can confirm them.

WHERE YOU ARE

New Zealand has one national law for registering a death, the coroner and estates, and this guide describes that national framework. Each cemetery has its own rules, so ask the cemetery about Muslim areas, graves and burial in a shroud.

1

Have the death confirmed

In the first hour

A doctor or nurse confirms the death and writes the cause of death certificate (Medical Certificate of Cause of Death). You need it to register the death and arrange the burial.

- [ ] If the death was unexpected, call 111 and ask for an ambulance and police
- [ ] At home, if the death was expected, call their doctor
- [ ] In a hospital, hospice or rest home, tell the staff on duty
- [ ] Tell the staff early that the family needs a quick burial for religious reasons

WHO SIGNS

The doctor or nurse gives the cause of death certificate. If the coroner is involved, the coroner authorises the release of the body instead. govt.nz, Registering a death (last updated 22 May 2024) ; govt.nz, What to do when someone dies (last updated 14 August 2026)

and

Close the eyes, cover the body, make duʿā

In the first hour · at the same time as the step above

Gently and without hurry. Those present can do this while the calls are made.

- [ ] Close the eyes and the mouth
- [ ] Straighten the arms and legs
- [ ] Cover the body with a clean sheet
- [ ] Pray for them, and say only good

EVIDENCE

The Prophet ﷺ closed the eyes of Abū Salamah and prayed for him. Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 920

2 Call the mosque's funeral service

In the first few hours

Many mosques and Muslim associations help with the washing, the shroud, the prayer and the burial, and know which funeral director to use.

- [ ] Call the mosque's funeral service or the imam
- [ ] Tell them where the body is and who the next of kin is
- [ ] Agree a time for the ghusl and the janazah prayer

NO NUMBER?
Call the nearest large mosque. They will know who to call.

3 Ask whether the coroner is involved PAPERWORK

If the death was sudden

The police tell a coroner when someone dies unexpectedly, violently or in suspicious circumstances, and a doctor who is unsure of the cause reports it too. The coroner decides whether there will be a post-mortem. The Coroners Court works 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

- [ ] Ask the police or hospital whether the death has gone to the coroner
- [ ] Tell the coordinator straight away that the family needs the body back quickly for religious reasons
- [ ] If you object to a post-mortem, say so within 24 hours of the coroner's decision
- [ ] Ask whether a limited post-mortem, such as an external examination or a CT scan, is enough

WHEN IT GOES TO THE CORONER
A death that is sudden, unexplained, violent, appears self-inflicted, medically unexpected, or happens in official custody or care. The police always tell a coroner about unexpected, violent or suspicious deaths, and the Coroners Court works around the clock. Coroners Court, First stages of the coronial process (last updated 7 May 2025) ; Coroners Court, home page (last updated 15 September 2026)

FAITH AND TIMING

In deciding on a post-mortem, the coroner must consider the distress caused to people whose beliefs require the body back as soon as possible, and to people who find post-mortems offensive. For the same reason, the coroner can order the post-mortem to be done immediately. Coroners Act 2006, s. 32 (as at 21 December 2018), legislation.govt.nz, Wayback capture ; Coroners Act 2006, s. 37 (as at 21 December 2018), legislation.govt.nz, Wayback capture

THE RIGHT TO OBJECT

Close family can object, unless the death was part of a crime or a delay would stop the pathologist finding the cause. Object within 24 hours, by phone to the coordinator, then on the form. The coroner may agree, order a limited post-mortem, or go ahead. Coroners Court, When the family doesn't want a post mortem (last updated 28 March 2017)

THE HIGH COURT

If the coroner decides to go ahead, you can apply to the High Court within 48 hours of being told of that decision. It hears the case urgently, and you may get help with the fee. A lawyer can help. Coroners Court, When the family doesn't want a post mortem (last updated 28 March 2017)

HOW LONG

The first stages often take 48 hours, but can take longer. The coroner may not always be able to meet the family's cultural priorities. The coordinators' office (NIIO) is on 0800 266 800. Coroners Court, First stages of the coronial process (last updated 7 May 2025)

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Register the death PAPERWORK

Within 3 working days of the burial

In New Zealand the death is registered after the burial. The funeral director usually does it with Births, Deaths and Marriages. If you arrange the burial yourself, you must register it.

- [ ] Ask the funeral director to confirm they have registered the death
- [ ] Without a funeral director, fill in form BDM28 and post it with the cause of death certificate
- [ ] Registration is free

THE TIME LIMIT

Within 3 working days of the burial. Not registering a death is an offence that can bring a fine. Department of Internal Affairs, Notification of a death (form BDM28), accessible text version ; govt.nz, Registering a death (last updated 22 May 2024)

WHAT YOU SEND

The cause of death certificate from the doctor or nurse, or the coroner's authorisation to release the body, with form BDM28. govt.nz, Registering a death (last updated 22 May 2024) ; Department of Internal Affairs, Notification of a death (form BDM28), accessible text version

5

Choose the funeral director and the grave PAPERWORK

Within the first day

A funeral director can register the death and organise the cause of death certificate. Each cemetery has its own rules, so ask the cemetery or the council that runs it.

- [ ] Ask the funeral director for the full costs before you agree
- [ ] Ask in advance whether the mosque's team or the family may wash the body at the funeral home
- [ ] Ask for no embalming
- [ ] Ask the cemetery whether it has a Muslim area, and whether burial in the shroud is allowed there

MUSLIM AREAS

Some councils have them. Christchurch's Memorial Park Cemetery has a Muslim burial area with graves facing Mecca. Ashburton Cemetery has one too. Christchurch City Council, Operational cemeteries (read 10 October 2026) ; Ashburton District Council, Burial Services (read 10 October 2026)

AN EXAMPLE

In Ashburton's Muslim area, the body is laid in the grave on its right side, facing Mecca, and a wooden board is placed over it so the soil does not touch it. Plots there cannot be bought in advance. Other councils have their own rules. Ashburton District Council, Burial Services (read 10 October 2026)

A COFFIN

We have not found a national rule on burial without a coffin. Ask the cemetery.

THE WASHING

We have not confirmed the rules on the family or a mosque team washing the body in a funeral home. Ask the funeral director in advance.

and

Wash and shroud the body

Within the first day · at the same time as the step above

Done by trained Muslims of the same sex, or by the spouse. The funeral service usually provides the cloth.

- [ ] Confirm who will wash
- [ ] Confirm the kafan is ready

How the washing and shroud are done ›

SPOUSES

A wife may wash her husband: Ibn al-Mundhir reports consensus. Most scholars allow a husband to wash his wife, and the Prophet ﷺ told ʿĀʾishah that if she died before him he would wash her (Ibn Mājah 1465); the Ḥanafī school does not allow the husband to. Ibn Qudāmah, al-Mughnī (Ḥanbalī, with the other schools), 2:390 ; Ibn ʿĀbidīn, Radd al-Muḥtār (Ḥanafī), 2:198–199

6

The janazah prayer and the burial

As soon as possible

The prayer is often held after one of the daily prayers, and the burial follows straight after.

- [ ] Tell family and community the time of the prayer
- [ ] Confirm the grave in a Muslim cemetery or Muslim area
- [ ] Ask the cemetery the earliest time it can bury, including at weekends

How to pray the janazah prayer ›

HASTE

The Prophet ﷺ told us to hurry with the funeral. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1315

THE LAW

We found no national minimum or maximum time between death and burial. Ask the funeral director or the cemetery about opening hours and weekend burials.

and

If the burial will be abroad PAPERWORK

Before the coffin is closed · at the same time as the step above

Some families bury their dead in another country. Ask the funeral director what paperwork is needed and who will do it. The estate usually pays, or the family if there is no money in it. Ask the funeral company what it costs and who signs before you agree. Check any insurance too.

- [ ] Tell the funeral director early that the burial will be abroad
- [ ] Call the embassy or consulate of the country early: it sets its own documents and conditions
- [ ] Ask whether embalming or a sealed coffin is required
- [ ] Check travel insurance and any funeral cover

REGISTRATION
The death is still registered in New Zealand. The form records the place abroad and the date the body leaves New Zealand. Department of Internal Affairs, Notification of a death (form BDM28), accessible text version

THE COUNTRY OF BURIAL
Each country sets its own requirements. We have not confirmed New Zealand's own rules for sending a body abroad, so ask the funeral director.

7

Get copies of the death certificate PAPERWORK

After the funeral

Ask each bank, insurer and government office whether it needs a death certificate. Order it once the funeral is over.

- [ ] Order it with the registration form, or later online, by phone, by post or in person
- [ ] In person: Auckland, Manukau, Wellington or Christchurch, with photo ID

COST
$35 for an official certificate. Most people get it in 1 to 2 weeks. govt.nz, Get a death certificate (last updated 15 September 2026)

8

Pay the funeral costs and list every debt

In the first weeks

The funeral is paid from the estate first, then the debts. Nothing is inherited until both are settled.

- [ ] Pay the funeral costs from the estate
- [ ] Ask the bank to release money from the deceased's account for the funeral
- [ ] List loans, bills and money owed to family
- [ ] Ask a scholar about any unpaid zakat

THE ORDER

Funeral, then debts, then bequests from a third, then the heirs. al-Sirājiyyah (al-Sajāwandī), opening chapter

FROM THE BANK

The bank freezes the accounts, but can release money for the funeral. You do not need to be the executor, or wait for probate. govt.nz, What to do when someone dies (last updated 14 August 2026)

FUNERAL GRANT

Work and Income can pay up to $2,697.43 towards reasonable funeral costs when the estate cannot pay. The person who died must have normally lived in New Zealand. You do not need to be on a benefit. For a partner or child, it depends on your income. Work and Income, Funeral Grant (read 10 October 2026) ; govt.nz, Financial help if someone dies (last updated 2 July 2026)

AFTER AN ACCIDENT

ACC can help with the cost of the burial. govt.nz, Financial help if someone dies (last updated 2 July 2026)

and

Find the will, and tell the government PAPERWORK

In the first weeks · at the same time as the step above

The executor named in the will leads what follows. The free myTrove online form lets you tell government departments, major banks and others.

- [ ] Check papers at home, email, and with any lawyer or trustee company
- [ ] Use myTrove to tell government departments, banks and others
- [ ] If the deceased was paid a benefit, NZ Super or a Veteran's Pension, contact Work and Income
- [ ] Secure the house and car, and keep the phone line active for sign-in codes

MYTROVE
A free online form to tell government departments, major banks, insurers and utility companies. govt.nz, What to do when someone dies (last updated 14 August 2026)

9

Settle and divide the estate PAPERWORK

In the months after

The High Court appoints the executor (probate) or, if there is no will, an administrator (letters of administration). A small estate may not need the court.

- [ ] Apply to the High Court if the estate needs it
- [ ] Close accounts and cancel subscriptions
- [ ] Pay any bequest, up to one third, to people who are not heirs
- [ ] Divide the rest by the fixed shares

See how the estate divides ›

ONE THIRD
A bequest is limited to a third, and an heir cannot receive one. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 2742 ; Sunan Abī Dāwūd 2870 (ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ)

PROBATE
It usually takes 6 to 8 weeks. The court fee can sometimes be waived, postponed or refunded. govt.nz, Wills, probate and estates (read 10 October 2026)

SMALL ESTATES

If the estate is worth less than $40,000, you may not need to apply to the High Court. govt.nz, Wills, probate and estates (read 10 October 2026)

CLAIMS

Family members can challenge a will or make claims on the estate in court. Ask a lawyer before dividing it. govt.nz, Wills, probate and estates (read 10 October 2026)

10

Look after the family

Four months and ten days

A woman keeps the prescribed mourning (iḥdād: setting aside adornment and perfume) for no more than three days for any death, except for her husband: then four months and ten days, the length of her ʿiddah, or until she gives birth if she is pregnant.

- [ ] Bring food and help with the household
- [ ] Help the widow with errands and appointments
- [ ] Make duʿā for the one who has died

What to say and do when you visit ›

EVIDENCE

A woman who believes in Allah and the Last Day does not mourn beyond three days, except for a husband: four months and ten days. A pregnant widow's term ends with the birth. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1280 ; Qurʾān, al-Ṭalāq 65:4

FOOD

Prepare food for the family, for what has happened has occupied them. Sunan Abī Dāwūd 3132 (ḥasan, al-Albānī)

ʿIDDAH DATES

Work out when four months and ten days have passed, by the Hijri and the Western calendar. Open ↗

11

Write your own Islamic will

For those left behind

Without a valid will, New Zealand law decides who inherits, not the fixed shares. An Islamic will in New Zealand is an ordinary will that directs the estate by the shares.

- [ ] Put it in writing and sign it in front of 2 witnesses, who are together and sign in front of you
- [ ] Ask a lawyer or trustee company who writes Islamic wills
- [ ] Ask them whether family members could claim more than the will gives them

Work out the Islamic shares to take to a lawyer ›

VALID WILL

Normally you must be 18 or over; ask a lawyer about the exceptions. The will must be in writing, signed by you while 2 witnesses are together with you, and each witness signs in your presence. Wills Act 2007, ss. 9 and 11 (as at 28 October 2021), legislation.govt.nz, Wayback capture

CLAIMS

A will can be challenged, and claims on the estate can go to court. A will that follows the shares can still be changed this way. govt.nz, Wills, probate and estates (read 10 October 2026)

General guidance, not a fatwa or legal advice. New Zealand law on registering a death, the coroner and estates is national, but each cemetery has its own rules, so Muslim areas and burial rules differ from place to place; your funeral director and a lawyer can confirm them.

Last reviewed October 2026. Something wrong? Tell us