

21 Questions about Cremation

What happens during the cremation process?

The casket or container is placed in the cremation chamber, where the temperature is raised to approximately 1200 degrees Celsius. After approximately 2 to 2 ½ hours, all organic matter is consumed by heat or evaporation. What are left are bone fragments, known as cremated remains. The cremated remains are then carefully removed from the cremation chamber. Any metal is removed with a magnet and later disposed of in cemetery grounds. The cremated remains are then processed into fine particles and are placed in the container provided by the crematorium or placed in an urn purchased by the family. The entire process takes approximately 3 hours. Throughout the cremation process, a carefully controlled labeling system ensures correct identification.

Are cremations done individually ?

Yes. Laws require that only one casket or container is cremated at a time. As well, the cremation chamber is only large enough to receive one container at a time.

When after death can a cremation take place ?

Because cremation is an irreversible process and because the process itself will eliminate any ability to determine exact cause of death, the law requires that each cremation take place no sooner than 6 hours after the deceased is confirmed by the medical authorities.

Is any other preparation required prior to cremation ?

It is essential that pacemakers and other medical devices be removed prior to cremation. They may explode when subjected to high temperature, which can be hazardous to crematorium staff and equipment. In addition, any special mementos, such as jewellery, will be destroyed during the cremation process. Anything you wish to keep should be removed by the funeral director before the casket or container is transferred to the crematorium.

Is it true that bones are crushed after cremation . . . I've heard you don't get ashes back, what do you get ?

A complete cremation is a two-step process. First, the actual exposure of the deceased to several hours of intense heat and flame; after which the remains are bone fragments. Second, the entire remaining bone fragments are refined, creating a uniform particle - like substance.

Is embalming necessary for cremation ?

No, it is your choice. It may depend on such factors as whether the family selected a service with a public viewing of the body with an open casket; or to enhance the deceased's appearance for a

private family viewing; if the body is going to be transported by air or rail; or because of the length of time prior to the cremation.

Is a casket required ?

Yes. For sanitary reasons, ease of placement and dignity, many cremations require that the deceased be cremated in a combustible, rigid, covered container. The type of casket or container selected is a personal decision. Caskets and containers are available in a wide variety of materials ranging from simple cardboard containers to beautifully handcrafted oak, maple, or mahogany caskets.

Can a casket be rented instead of purchased when choosing cremation ?

Most funeral homes offer a hardwood ceremonial casket for viewing or funeral services prior to cremation. The ceremonial (or rental) casket is specifically designed to provide a very aesthetically pleasing, affordable and environmentally prudent alternative to purchasing a casket for a cremation service.

Can I bring my own urn ?

Yes, however, it would be advisable that you discuss this situation with your funeral director or counsellor prior to the cremation. The size and type of your urn will be of great importance if you plan to have your loved one's cremated remains included in this container. This also affects the permanent placement of the urn.

Can I witness the cremation?

Yes, arrangements can be made for relatives or representatives of the deceased to witness the cremation.

Do all funeral homes have a crematorium ?

No, as a matter of fact, only a small percentage of cremation services providers have their own cremation units.

Is cremation a substitution for a funeral ?

No, cremation is simply a method of preparing human remains for final disposition.

Do I have to make different funeral arrangements if I choose cremation ?

It really depends on how you wish to commemorate a life. One of the advantages of cremation is that it provides you with increased flexibility when you make your funeral and cemetery arrangements. You might, for example, choose to have a funeral service before the cremation; a memorial service at the time of cremation or after the cremation with the urn present; or a committal service at the final disposition of cremated remains. Funeral or memorial services can be held in a place of worship, a funeral home, or in a crematorium chapel.

Can we have the service before or after the cremation ?

It's completely a matter of family preference. Many times when a family is split regarding the

decision to cremate, a compromise may be achieved by having a traditional service first to be followed by cremation.

What can be done with the cremated remains ?

With cremation, your options are numerous. The cremated remains can be interred in a cemetery plot (earth burial), placed in a niche, retained by a family member, or at a place that was significant to the deceased. It is advisable to check for local regulations regarding scattering in a public place. Cremation is just one step in the commemorative process, the preparation of the human remains for memorialization. Today, there are many different types of memorial options from which to choose. Memorialization is a time - honoured tradition that has been practiced for centuries. A memorial service is a tribute to a life lived and provides a focal point for remembrance, as well as a record for future generations.

The type of memorial you choose is a personal decision and the limit is set only by your imagination.

What is memorialization for cremation?

You might choose ground burial of the urn. If so, you may usually choose either a bronze memorial or monument. Also available at many cemeteries are cremation niches in a columbarium. A columbarium, sometimes free - standing, either indoor or outdoor, is constructed of numerous small compartments (niches) designed to hold urns containing cremated remains. They offer the beauty of a mausoleum setting with the benefits of above ground placement of remains.

If I'm going to be cremated, why would I want my remains to be placed in a columbarium, or interred at the cemetery? Why shouldn't I just have them scattered in the sea or in some other place of my choosing?

As long as it is permitted by local regulations, your cremated remains can be scattered in a place that is meaningful to you. This can, however, present difficulties for your survivors. Some people may find it hard to simply pour the mortal remains of a loved one out onto the ground or into a body of water. It is important to discuss your wishes ahead of time with the person who will actually have to do the scattering. Another difficulty can occur when the remains are disposed of in an anonymous, unmarked or public place. Access to the area may be restricted for some reason in the future, undeveloped land may be developed, or any of a host of other conditions may arise that could make it difficult for your survivors to visit the site to remember you. Having your remains placed, interred, or scattered on a cemetery's grounds ensures that future generations will have a place to go to remember. If remains are scattered somewhere outside the cemetery, many cemeteries will allow you to place a memorial of some type on the cemetery grounds, so survivors have a place to visit that will always be maintained and preserved.

Why is having a place to visit so important ?

Because it provides a focal point for memorializing the deceased. To remember and to be remembered are natural human needs. Throughout human history, memorialization of the dead has been a key component of almost every culture. Psychologists say that remembrance practices, from the funeral or memorial service to permanent memorialization, serve an important emotional function for survivors by helping bring closure and allowing the healing

process to begin. Providing a permanent resting place for the deceased is a dignified treatment for a loved one's mortal remains, which fulfills the natural human desire for memorialization.

If I am cremated, can I be buried with my spouse even if he or she was in a casket ?

Yes, depending on the cemetery's policy, you may be able to save a grave space by having the cremated remains buried on top of your casketed spouse, or utilize the space provided next to him or her. Many cemeteries allow for multiple cremated remains to be interred in a single grave space.

Can I take the cremated remains home ?

Yes. The remains are normally placed in an urn. Most families select an urn that is suitable for placement on a mantle or a shelf. Urns are available in a variety of shapes, sizes, and materials. Although, after a short time it is advisable to have the remains placed permanently in a cemetery.