



National Home Funeral Alliance

Time and presence ... the gifts of a home funeral

(<http://homefuneralalliance.org/>)

HOME FUNERAL SAFETY

Home funerals are safe

Are dead bodies dangerous?

Touching and caring for a deceased loved one is safe. So, are dead bodies dangerous? The answer is, almost always, NO.

Watch this slightly tongue-in-cheek YouTube.com video answering the question, “Are Dead Bodies Dangerous?” by Caitlin Doughty, of “Ask a Mortician.” A funeral director and author, Caitlin creates these videos to educate the public about some of the misconceptions around death.

ASK A MORTICIAN: Are Dead Bodies Dangerous?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=3&v=yw7bsNKsABQ



Dead bodies and disease: the danger that doesn't exist

Read this information from the Funeral Consumer Alliance about the myth of contagion from dead bodies (<https://www.funerals.org/frequently-asked-questions/142-embalming-myths-facts>).

Health risks from dead bodies

The following information is from Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Health_risks_from_dead_bodies), the free encyclopedia:

False risks

According to health professionals, the fear of spread of disease by bodies killed by trauma rather than disease is not justified. Among others, Steven Rottman, director of the UCLA (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UCLA>) Center for Public Health and Disasters (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UCLA_School_of_Public_Health), said that no scientific evidence exists that bodies of disaster victims increase the risk of epidemics, adding that cadavers posed less risk of contagion than living people. In disasters involving trauma where there is competition for resources, they should be going into establishment of water supply, sanitation, shelter, warmth and hygienic food for the survivors, not digging mass graves. Spraying is a waste of disinfectant and manpower. Indiscriminate burial of corpses demoralises survivors and the lack of death certificates can cause practical problems to survivors.

Other considerations which are very important, but not directly relevant to the topic of health risks, include religious and cultural practices, the stench, and the effect on morale.

Roots of incorrect notion

The incorrect notion that *all* dead bodies inherently cause diseases is consistent with:

1. The incorrect historical miasma theory of disease, which held that diseases are spread by foul air—in this case fouled by the stench of decomposing corpses.
2. Confusion between normal decay processes and signs of disease; and the incorrect idea that microorganisms responsible for decomposition are dangerous to living people. “Microorganisms involved in the decay process (putrefaction) are not pathogenic.”
3. After a major disaster, disease among survivors is indeed a problem, but is actually due to living in harsh conditions with poor sanitation. “Survivors present a much more important reservoir for disease [than cadavers].”
4. Noting that corpses of those who died from certain **contagious diseases** (for example, in epidemics) do, indeed, spread disease, such as the case with smallpox and the 1918 flu, and incorrectly generalizing this to all corpses.

According to the Pan American Health Organization (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pan_American_Health_Organization) “concern that dead bodies are infectious can be considered a ‘natural’ reaction by persons wanting to protect themselves from disease” although “the risk that bodies [of those killed in a natural disaster] pose for the public is extremely small.”