



Mayo Clinic Alzheimer's Disease Research Center Autopsy Program

Why are autopsies important?

Autopsies provide benefits for researchers and families alike. For families, autopsies can determine a definitive diagnosis. For researchers, just one donated brain contributes to hundreds of research studies. These brains allow scientists to better understand normal aging, and the causes of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias.

What should I do if I am considering an autopsy?

Talk to the research team and ask questions. They can help you complete an Advance Directive for Autopsy. Discuss the plans with your family and let them know your wishes. A copy of the directive will also be placed in your medical record.

What is the difference between complete autopsy and limited? Which box do I check?

Limited autopsies only look at brain tissue to determine the cause of cognitive decline. Complete autopsies look at all organs and tissues to determine cause of death and help answer questions about other health conditions.

What is the process at the time of death?

If the death occurs in the Rochester area, please call the Mayo Clinic Office of Decedent Affairs (ODA) at 507-293-7800. They are available 24 hours / 7 days a week. The ODA will arrange transportation with the family's selected funeral home to have the autopsy performed at Mayo Clinic.

If you live outside of the Rochester area, planning for an autopsy should be done well in advance. Research staff can assist you in making the necessary arrangements ahead of time.

Is there any cost to the family?

Autopsies come at no cost to the families of Mayo Clinic patients. Our department will pay costs for transportation to and from the pathologist, and for the tissue retrieval to be done at an outside facility if needed.

We do not cover funeral expenses or provide cremation.



I am an organ donor on my Driver's license, can I do both?

Yes, the pathology department will coordinate with the organ donation team.

Can an open casket visitation still be done?

Yes, open casket visitations are still an option for those who choose a brain autopsy. There is no noticeable evidence of the autopsy and autopsies will not delay funeral plans.

How will my family learn the results?

Final autopsy report will be sent to the legal next of kin approximately 6 months after donation.

Who should I call if my family or I have any questions?

Please feel free to contact us with any questions:

Alzheimer's Disease Research Center

Mayo Clinic Study of Aging
3033 41st St NW
Rochester, MN 55901
507-284-1324

Mayo Clinic Office of Decedent Affairs – 24- hour service
507-293-7800