

## What is an autopsy?

A medical exam and procedure to try and help determine the cause of death or other factors that may have led to the death of your child.

- Complete Autopsy: A full exam of your child's body inside and out.
- Limited Autopsy: A focused look at one organ or part of the body. Examples are brain only, chest only (ex: heart and lungs), abdomen only (ex: liver, kidneys, intestines), chest and abdomen. This type of autopsy may limit the ability of the pathologist to know what caused your child's death.

## Why do an autopsy?

- To try and answer questions about what caused your child's death.
- To get additional information about your child's illness.
- To understand if the illness or condition is genetic and may be passed on or be present in other family members. Genetic testing requires consent and is not part of a routine autopsy.
- To support research to better understand and diagnose complex disorders or illnesses and potentially offer cures in the future.
- Sometimes an autopsy is required by law and is performed by the medical examiner, not Texas Children's Pathology. Your health care provider will inform you about this.

## Who does the autopsy?

Doctors called pathologists will oversee your child's autopsy. Autopsies are done at Texas Children's Hospital Main Campus at the Texas Medical Center.

## What is the cost?

Autopsies are free of charge to patients of Texas Children's Hospital.

## How long does it take and when are results available?

- Autopsy procedure takes 4-5 hours on average
- Comprehensive examination and interpretation of findings take about 3 months before the results are available.
- Results can be shared with you in person or over the phone by your primary doctor or specialist. Call your primary care physician or specialist to discuss results after 3 months.
- Results will NOT be mailed or available in My Chart.

## Will this affect funeral plans?

- The incisions of autopsy will not be visible when your child is dressed.
- Autopsy should not delay funeral.
- If specific time frames are necessary for religious or personal reasons, please have the health care team call and ask if requests can be accommodated.

## Other information

- Autopsy can be done if your child dies at home or at another health care facility. There is no charge for the autopsy; however, you may be responsible for the funeral home cost to transport to and from the hospital. Texas Children's Hospital social services may be a resource to facilitate funeral home transport.
- Consent must be signed and witnessed BEFORE an autopsy can be done.
- Although the autopsy examination is comprehensive, it is possible that when completed, the exact cause of your child's death may not be known.