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Islamic ruling on importance of giving ghusl and offering the janazah prayer observing social distancing

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Ghusl and the body

The ritual washing of the body of the Believer is an obligation upon the Community according to the vast majority of scholars. The Prophet (sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) commanded the female Companions to wash the body of his daughter Zaynab (radhy Allahu 'anha). He (sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) also said for the general Muslims, *"Wash the dead body an odd number of times i.e. three, five or seven times or more if you feel that is necessary."* (Bukhari)

The only time that this obligation is rescinded is if it is not physically possible for it to be performed. According to the WHO and other leading international health authorities, the washing of the body of a deceased Covid-19 victim is something permitted and possible as long as precautions are taken and the washers are trained and experienced in washing. As long as those guidelines are followed, the obligation to wash the body remains. If those precautions cannot be taken due to some valid reason, then it is permissible to perform the dry ablution as per Islamic fiqh, and as detailed in the NBC guidelines.

For the evidences and guidelines from the PHE, NHS, CDC and further references which prove the infection risk is low and thus the ghusl should be offered by trained washers with the appropriate PPE, please see:

<https://www.gov.uk/.../new-advice-for-safe-funerals-after...>

https://apps.who.int/.../WHO-COVID-19-IPC_DBMgmt-2020.1...

<https://www.gov.uk/.../covid-19-guidance-for-care-of-the...>

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/.../When_to_use...

<https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/.../COVID-19-safe-handling-of...>

<https://www.rcpath.org/.../G200-TBPs-Guidance-for-care-of...>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html...>

Minimal people at Janazah observing social distancing

The Janazah prayer is an obligation upon the Community to perform for the deceased. Due to physical distancing guidelines, this cannot be performed in the normal manner at our Mosques or outside prayer areas. Therefore it can be performed at the graveyard with as little as two people - such as those who have buried the deceased - upto a small number of no more than 10-15 people, all standing two metres apart from one another within a prayer line, and then each subsequent line spaced out two metres behind the line in front. Any family members who cannot attend can perform the Janazah prayer later themselves at the graveyard, or together themselves when legal rules allow it, as per the well-established rulings of fiqh. Please see your local scholars for more on how to perform this prayer later.