

22 Handling dead bodies

OVERVIEW



In some diseases, such as cholera and especially Ebola, Marburg and Rift Valley fever, dead bodies can spread the disease even further.

In such cases, you should be very careful when handling dead bodies.

What you need to KNOW

- ➔ The bodies of people who have died from certain diseases must be promptly and safely buried to protect others from the spread of the epidemic.
- ➔ There may be specialists from the Ministry of Health or other organizations doing the burials. If this is the case, YOU SHOULD DO THE HEALTH PROMOTION AND LET THEM DO THEIR JOB.
- ➔ Burial of dead people is a sensitive issue for the community. You must be careful not to upset people and help them to understand why the burial of their loved one is being done in a different way from usual.
- ➔ Provide psychosocial support to the families of the dead person (see *Action tool 34*).

Remember

- Burying dead bodies can be a health hazard.
- If you have to do it, always ask for professional help and advice.
- The main duty of Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers is to conduct health promotion in the community. You can make more difference in this way than in any other way.

Use community message(s): 19

22 Handling dead bodies

Safe burial of dead bodies

- Talk to community leaders and seek their support for what you are doing.
- Respect traditions without compromising safety.
- DO NOT GET DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN BURIALS IF THIS TASK IS BEING DONE BY SOMEONE ELSE.
- Carry out all activities calmly and respectfully.
- Always take care and protect yourself before anything else (see *Action tool 20*) and use personal protection equipment when needed (see *Action tool 21*).
- Disinfect the room and destroy the belongings (clothes) of a person who has died of Ebola, Marburg or Rift Valley fever.



Keep the community clean



ALWAYS ask professionals to spray against vectors