

# The Embalming Process

## Preparing The Body For Embalming

Before the surgical embalming or cosmetic processes can begin, the body is washed in a disinfectant solution and the whole body is massaged and manipulated to relieve rigor mortis (stiffening of the joints and muscles). Any facial hair is shaved off, unless the person who died wore facial hair.

## Setting The Facial Features

The eyes are closed, often using skin glue and/or plastic flesh-colored oval-shaped “eye caps” that sit on the eye and secure the eyelid in place. The mouth is closed and the lower jaw is secured, either by sewing or wires. If the jaw is sewn shut, suture string is threaded through the lower jaw below the gums, up and through the gums of the top front teeth, into the right or left nostril, through the septum, into the other nostril, and back down into the mouth. Then the two ends of suture string are tied together. If the jaw is wired shut, a tool called a needle injector is often used to insert a piece of wire anchored to a needle into the upper and lower jaws. The wires are tied together to securely close the mouth. Once the jaw has been secured, the mouth can be manipulated into the desired arrangement.

## Arterial Embalming

For arterial embalming, the blood is removed from the body via the veins and replaced with an embalming solution via the arteries. The embalming solution is usually a combination of formaldehyde, glutaraldehyde, methanol, ethanol, phenol, and water, and may also contain dyes in order to simulate a life-like skin-tone.

**\*\*Note:** For cosmetic purposes, the subclavian artery and vein are used for men and the femoral artery and vein are used for ladies.

## Cavity Embalming

For cavity embalming, a small incision is made near the bellybutton and a sharp surgical instrument used for drainage, called a trocar, is inserted into the body cavity. Using the trocar, organs in the chest cavity and abdomen are punctured and drained of gas and fluid contents and then replaced with formaldehyde-based chemical mixtures. The incision is closed, and at this point the body is fully embalmed.