

Adipocire

Adipocire is the transformation of tissues into a whitish, oily mass. It is one of the late postmortem chemical changes. Adipocire or saponification, occurs in a moist environment without air. Soaps are formed by the reaction of higher fatty acids from adipose tissue with Na^+ , K^+ , Ca^{2+} , Mg^{2+} or NH_4^+ ions from the surrounding environment. The process starts with maceration of the skin and is followed by the actual soaping after a few weeks. Adipocire is directed from the surface to the depth. In 2-3 years it permeates the whole body. The surface of the corpse and the internal organs are relatively well preserved even after several years. With air, the mass dries, solidifies, crumbles and loses its odour.

Conditions of formation: moisture, body fat, lack of oxygen.