

# Exhumation

**Exhumation** means the removal of a dead body from the grave by official permission or order. An exhumation is carried out when it is suspected that a person's death was caused by a crime. The exhumation is followed by a forensic autopsy, which is carried out by a forensic expert at the Institute of Forensic Medicine.

The cost of the exhumation is borne by the person who requested it. The operator of the burial ground is obliged to ensure that the exhumation is carried out in such a way as to prevent, for example, the transmission of possible infection.

Human remains may be exhumed at the request of the occupier of the burial site before the expiry of the cremation period, which lasts for at least 10 years (depending, of course, on local humidity, soil composition and temperature).

Exhumation must be carried out in such a way as not to damage the body. The body must then be identified by the attached death certificate. The identification mainly uses immutable features such as skin colour, skull and face shape, nose shape, birth defects, permanent conditions from previous illnesses and injuries, blood type, DNA analysis or the serial number of the implant or joint replacement. Dental records are very valuable; the condition of the teeth can even be used to determine the age of a person who is still unknown.

Inorganic poisons can be demonstrated in the body of the deceased indefinitely (e.g. arsenic). Organic poisons can be demonstrated for different lengths of time depending on their type, some for a few months, others for several years. Fractures, skeletal defects and gunshot wounds can be demonstrated even after many years, for example X-rays are used for this purpose. Cut and stab wounds can be proven after several months, but this depends on the degree of decomposition of the body.



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### References

- ŠTEFAN, Jiří a Jiří HLADÍK, et al. *Soudní lékařství a jeho moderní trendy*. 1. vydání. Praha : Grada, 2012. ISBN 978-80-247-3594-8.