

# Episode 271 - TD01 - Understanding Epicurus Through Tusculan Disputations

Post by “Kalosyni” of March 9, 2025 at 4:02 PM

Touching on the topic of the nature of death which came up during the podcast recording...here is an interesting article... a modern understanding of "What Really Happens When You Die":

Excerpt:

## Quote

When you die, you have to have your death certified by a doctor and a death certificate or a cremation certificate issued. If we have had contact with a patient in the previous two weeks and know the cause of death - if someone has been terminally ill, say - we can sign the death certificate immediately. If we haven't seen the patient in the two weeks before their death, or if they have died after being discharged from hospital, then we must report it to the coroner, who may request a postmortem. The coroner may also request a postmortem if drugs or alcohol are suspected, or if there's any suggestion of a violent death. It's my job to say if somebody is dead, not how they died.

What I'm essentially looking for is brainstem activity. The brainstem is the part of the brain where the body's vital functions are controlled - the breathing, the heart, the brain itself; it is the computer room of the body. If that bit of the brain is dead, then the person is essentially dead. You can still have reflex actions, so you may twitch after death.

To certify that someone is dead, you listen to the heart for one minute and feel for a pulse for one minute. You examine for signs of breathing, you look at the pupils to check there is no response to a shining light. If you're not certain, you can rub on the breastbone, which is a very painful procedure: if they are not dead, they'll quickly jump up and say, "That hurt!"

Nowadays there are machine tests for brainstem death that involve connecting up the brain and looking at the activity. Those tests would be done before organ donation.

[Read the full article here](#)