

Embalmer

Embalmers prepare bodies to ensure they are preserved and presentable until they are buried or cremated.

The Work

You could be:

- washing and sterilising the body to prevent deterioration or infection
- removing fluid and gases from the body
- injecting a disinfecting chemical into the body to preserve it
- restoring normal appearance after injury using wax or plaster of Paris
- doing other work to improve appearance, such as inserting eye pads, wiring the jaw to keep it closed, shaving, washing and arranging hair and applying cosmetics
- working with funeral directors to ensure that families' wishes are met
- keeping the mortuary clean, and following health and safety regulations
- checking stock and ordering supplies, such as chemicals.

With some employers, embalming is part of a funeral directors job. See the job profile for [Funeral Director](#).

Pay

Pay rates vary, depending on:

- where you work
- the size of company you work for
- the demand for the job.

Starting salaries for trainee embalmers tend to be around £20,000 a year. With experience this can rise to £35,000 a year, or more.

Conditions

- You would generally work 37 to 39 hours, Monday to Friday, but may need to cover weekends on a rota basis.
- You may need to travel about if you work for more than one funeral director.
- You would work in a clean environment, colder than normal room temperature.
- You would spend a lot of time standing and bending.
- You would wear protective clothing including gown, gloves and boots.

Getting In

- You do not need formal qualifications, but some employers may prefer applicants with English, Maths and a science subject at National 4 or 5.
- Entry is very competitive. Some embalmers are self-employed and work for several funeral directors.

- A driving licence can be useful.
- You may be advised to have immunisations against hepatitis A and B, tetanus, polio, typhoid and tuberculosis (TB).

What Does It Take

You need to be:

- sensitive to other people's feelings
- understanding of different religious beliefs
- able to follow strict health and safety procedures
- responsible, with a mature attitude.

You should have:

- good hand skills for using tools and surgical instruments
- excellent concentration and attention to detail
- a strong stomach for sights and smells
- a keen interest in science, particularly chemistry and anatomy.

Training

- Training is mostly on the job.
- You would usually study for qualifications approved by the [British Institute of Embalmers](#) (BIE).
- The course covers theory and practical modules and is completed over 2 to 3 years.
- Following successful completion of all exams, you can become a registered member of the BIE.

Getting On

- Some embalmers become self-employed, setting up their own business or becoming partners in an existing firm.
- You may go on to work as a funeral director.
- You could train to work in specialist areas, such as disaster teams.

Contacts

Statistics

Employment Status : Not available this career.

Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

Predicted Employment Statistics : Not available this career.