

## Even after death, the body is teeming with life

Far from being 'dead', a rotting corpse is teeming with life. A growing number of scientists view a rotting corpse as the cornerstone of a vast and complex ecosystem, which emerges soon after death and flourishes and evolves as decomposition proceeds.

During the early stages, the cadaveric ecosystem consists mostly of the bacteria that live in and on the living human body. Our bodies host huge numbers of bacteria; every one of the body's surfaces and corners provides a habitat for a specialised microbial community. By far the largest of these communities resides in the gut, which is home to trillions of bacteria of hundreds or perhaps thousands of different species.

The gut microbiome is one of the hottest research topics in biology; it's been linked to roles in human health and a plethora of conditions and diseases, from autism and depression to irritable bowel syndrome and obesity. But we still know little about these microbial passengers. We know even less about what happens to them when we die.

Most internal organs are devoid of microbes when we are alive. Soon after death, however, the immune system stops working, leaving them to spread throughout the body freely. This usually begins in the gut, at the junction between the small and large intestines. Left unchecked, our gut bacteria begin to digest the intestines – and then the surrounding tissues – from the inside out, using the chemical cocktail that leaks out of damaged cells as a food source.

**The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: [This is what happens after you die](#)**