

Rigor Mortis Reference Tables

Table 1: Progression of Rigor Mortis (@ air temp of 70°F)

<u>Time After Death</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Appearance</u>	<u>Circumstances</u>
2-4 hours	Rigor begins	Body becomes stiff and stiffness moves down body.	Stiffness begins with the eyelids and jaw muscles after about three hours, then center of body stiffens, then arms and legs.
6- 12 hours	Rigor complete	Peak rigor is exhibited.	Entire body is rigid.
18 hours	Begins to go away	Loss of rigor in small muscles first followed by larger muscles.	Rigor lost first in head and neck and last in bigger leg muscles.
By 36 hours	Rigor has usually disappeared	Muscles become flaccid.	Many variables may extend some rigor beyond the normal 36 hours.

Table 2: Factors Affecting Rigor Mortis

<u>Factors Affecting Rigor</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Effect</u>	<u>Circumstances</u>
Temperature	Cold temperature	Inhibits rigor	Slower onset and slower progression of rigor
	Warm temperature	Accelerates rigor	Faster onset and faster progression of rigor
Activity before death	Aerobic exercise	Accelerates rigor	Lack of oxygen to muscles accelerates rigor
	Sleep	Slows rigor	Muscles fully oxygenated will exhibit rigor more slowly
Body weight	Obesity	Slows rigor	Fat stores oxygen
	Thin	Accelerates rigor	Body loses oxygen quickly