

Patient Information

Palliative Care

Caring for someone who is dying

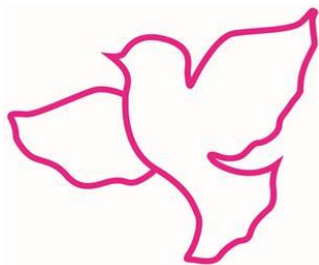
This leaflet explains:

- What happens to a person in the last hours of life.
- How you can help.
- Who to contact if you have any questions or concerns.
- Where to find more information.

If there is anything you do not understand, please speak to the ward nurse or doctor.

If the ward nurses or doctors need extra support in caring for the dying person or to address your concerns, they will contact the **Palliative Care Team**. The Palliative Care Team are available Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4.30pm.

The DOVE Logo



Patient Information

The DOVE logo is a symbol used to let our teams know that the person is in their last days of life. It ensures that the person and their loved ones are treated with dignity and care.

This logo is placed on the door of the room.

If for any reason you would prefer this is not used, please let your ward nurse know, and it will be removed.

Caring for someone who is dying

The dying process is unique to each individual. It is a natural process and there are common changes that tell us that the person is reaching the end of their life.

Reduced need for food and drink

- As their body begins to shut down, the person no longer needs as much food or drink and they do not feel hungry or thirsty.
- They slow down and cannot digest or make use of the food as well as they used to.
- People tend to drink less. Although their mouth may look dry, gently moistening the mouth can give comfort.
- They may struggle to swallow food and drink.

Withdrawing from the World

- In the last hours and days of life, people often become more withdrawn.
- They may spend more time sleeping and, when they are awake, they may appear drowsy or less interested with the world around them.

Changes in breathing

- When someone is close to the end of their life, their breathing pattern may change. You may notice deeper or more shallow breathing.
- In the last hours, breathing can sometimes become noisy. This is caused by a build-up of natural mucus or secretions in the back of the

Patient Information

throat. This can sound distressing but the person themselves is often not aware of this.

- Changing their position can help and medication is available to reduce the noise if needed.

Changes before a person dies

- When death is very close (within minutes or hours) the breathing patterns may change. There might be long pauses between breaths, or the abdominal (tummy) muscles may take over, causing the abdomen (tummy) to rise and fall instead of the chest.
- Some people may become more agitated as death approaches. If this happens, staff will assess the cause and provide appropriate medication to make sure the person is comfortable and at ease.
- The person's skin may appear pale, moist, and slightly cool to the touch. Most people do not wake up again but die peacefully, comfortably, and quietly.

How you can help

- In the final stages of life, having loved ones can provide comfort. Even if the person cannot respond to you, they may still hear your voice and feel reassured that you are there with them.
- You could play their favourite music or prayer and share stories about their life with family and friends.
- If the person seems agitated, it can be helpful to hold their hand and assure them you are there for them.
- If their mouth is dry, you can support with keeping it moist and comfortable with water and a soft toothbrush. Ask the nursing team to show you how to do this if you are not sure.

There is a video created by Dr. Kathryn Mannix, a Palliative Care Consultant, called "Dying For Beginners." This video helps understand what happens when someone is in their last days and hours of life and may be helpful for you. You can access it using the QR code below.



Patient Information

Useful information

- Please speak to the ward nurses and doctors, if you have any questions, concerns, or worries at any time.
- The Palliative Care Team is available Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4.30pm and will usually visit your loved one within 1 working day of referral.
- We offer free parking for one car for up to 1 week (Monday to Friday). This can be managed by the Palliative Care Team. On weekends, please speak to the ward team and the Hospital Bleep Holder will help you.
- Interpreter services are available to help communicate with those whose first language is not English. Please ask the staff if you think this service would be helpful.
- Our Chaplaincy Team offers spiritual support for people for all faiths or none. They are available every day. If you would like to speak with a Chaplain, please speak to the ward team .

If you would like to share your experiences or provide feedback outside of the service, please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) at:

Phone: 0800 028 4203

Email: feedback@uhcw.nhs.uk

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

Document History

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Did we get it right?

We would like you to tell us what you think about our services. This helps us to make further improvements and to recognise members of staff who provide a good service.

Have your say. Scan the QR code or visit:

www.uhcw.nhs.uk/feedback

