

Care plan for the dying person

Spiritual and cultural needs in the last days of life

Comfort assessment and management fact sheet

Identification of the person's individual health beliefs, health practices, spiritual, cultural and linguistic needs ideally should be completed as early as possible in the person's admission process to hospital. If this has not already been assessed, it is highly important to attend to these aspects of care as the person is approaching the last days of life. Respecting and being sensitive to the individual needs of people from diverse cultural, linguistic and spiritual backgrounds, their loved ones and community ties is integral to the delivery of high-quality care.

Customs or values that people may have that are important in relation to dying can include:

- the importance of family
- dying away from country of origin
- discussing private issues with health professionals or non-family members
- the amount of information they want about prognosis
- if it is appropriate to communicate with family or community members about prognosis
- the importance of food and eating
- feelings about hospitals
- attitudes to pain or medication management
- certain medical practices that they want withheld
- end of life rituals, for example, last rites, visits from friends and family, giving away belongings
- post death rituals, for example, what needs to happen to the body in preparation for burial
- post death procedures, for example, autopsy or organ donation.

How to help

- Spiritually and culturally appropriate support may be organised by referring to a spiritual carer, pastoral care or cultural advisor with their consent.
- A referral to the ward social worker with their consent may also be considered.
- Ensure an interpreter or translator is available for the dying person and/or their family, carers or substitute decision-makers if they require it, and provide written information about services or treatments in their preferred language.
- For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the time before death and following death is a very sensitive and significant period and is subject to customary practices.
- As a matter of best practice, seek cultural guidance from the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Hospital Liaison Officer, Health Worker, the persons family group or the wider community.

Key message

More information can be found in the Queensland Health guidelines [Sad news, Sorry Business-Guidelines for caring for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people through death and dying \(2022\)](#).

References

palliAGED. (2025). Spiritual Care. www.palliaged.com.au/Evidence-Centre/Care-Needs/Spiritual-Care

Sad news sorry business. www.health.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0023/151736/sorry_business.pdf

