

The care environment in the last days of life

Comfort assessment and management fact sheet

The person's physical surroundings can have a profound effect on their comfort in the last days of life. Therefore, nursing, allied health and support staff should help create a clean, calm and homely environment where the person feels safe.

This includes:

- relocating the person to a single room where possible
- removing any medical equipment, intravenous infusion stands, pumps and clutter so that the family can be physically close to their loved one
- using complementary therapies for example diffusers for favourite scents and aromatherapy, depending on patient and family preferences
- paying attention to lighting and the temperature of the room
- considering communication tools, suitable nurse call bell device within reach
- encouraging the family/carers to personalise the space by playing their favourite music, bringing in personal objects, photos or other belongings
- offering donated quilts or personal blankets for the bed if available
- ensuring sufficient seating space for loved ones and offer recliner chairs and overnight bedding if they wish to stay overnight.

How to help

- Compassion shown by staff can have an enormous impact on a patient's experience of care, we can show compassion with the use of the compassionate door sign.
- The sign can be placed on the room door of a person who is imminently dying, this helps to maintain a private and respectful environment.
- It discreetly signifies to staff that the person is dying, ensuring only essential staff enter the room and are sensitive to the needs of the person and their family.
- Before entering the room, take a compassionate pause, reflect, consider the necessity of entering, and be sensitive to the needs of the person and their family
- There are two signs available, one is suitable for use with all patients and the other for use with people who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders.

Key message

The DandELinE Toolkit is a Queensland Health initiative for Decision making and End-of-life care in Emergency Settings, aiming to support improved care, including care of the environment for dying patients in ED.

References

[Compassionate care during death, dying and bereavement | Queensland Health](#)

[Decision making and End-of-Life-care in Emergency \(DandELinE\) | Clinical Excellence Queensland](#)