

Managing a home death



What to do when a person dies at home

Many people can feel anxious or fearful when they think about the process of dying.

Your local health care provider or palliative care team will support you and your loved one during the final days of life. The following information will help you to know what to do when a person has an expected death at home.

How will you know if the person has died?

You will know when you see the following:

- The person cannot be roused
- The person stops breathing
- There is no heartbeat or pulse
- The person's pupils are fixed – staring straight ahead. Their eyelids may remain half open.

PLEASE KEEP THE CONTACT DETAILS FOR YOUR LOCAL SUPPORT NETWORK NEARBY (SEE BELOW)

What should you do after the death has occurred?

You don't have to contact anyone right away, unless you choose to. Call a relative or friend if you want them to be with you. When you are ready:

- **Call a staff member from your local palliative care service or your GP/nurse.** They will arrange the completion of the paperwork required for the funeral director.
- **There is no need to call the police or ambulance service.** As the person was a known palliative care patient and their death was expected, it is not classed as an emergency. In some rural areas, the ambulance may assist with the Life Extinct form.
- The person can stay at home for a while if you would like friends and relatives to come and say their goodbyes.
- Some families like to bathe and dress their loved one or conduct other ceremonies or rituals; it is your choice. If possible, the person may be positioned onto their back. Dentures can be reinserted into their mouth, if comfortable doing so.
- Continue to keep the room cool.

Funeral arrangements

When you are ready, contact the funeral director who will take the person's body and guide you through the funeral arrangements.

If you have not arranged a specific funeral director, your GP/ community nurse may recommend one. Alternatively, you can search online or in the telephone directory for a funeral director of your choice.

Bereavement counselling

Grieving is a natural part of losing someone close to you. Counselling can help people who are grieving. Bereavement support may be a part of the service provided by the palliative care team or through your GP.

IMPORTANT CONTACT NUMBERS

PALLIATIVE CARE: / (AFTER HOURS NUMBER)

FUNERAL DIRECTOR: NURSING SERVICE:

GP: