



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. Please keep the contact details for your local support network handy (see below).

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.

What should you do after the death has occurred?

- You don't have to contact anyone straight away, unless you want to
- Telephone 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 completion of the paperwork that is required for the funeral director.
 - **There is no need to ring 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 may 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 patient may be positioned onto their back. Dentures can be fitted back into their mouth, if comfortable doing so.
 - Continue to keep the room is 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 planned for any specific funeral director, your GP/community nurse may advise you who may be appropriate. Alternatively, you can search for a funeral director of your choice (online or telephone directory)

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 contact your GP.

Important contact numbers

Palliative care **Business hours** _____ **After hours** _____

Funeral Director: _____ Nursing Service: _____

GP: _____