

How to recognize that the person is close to dying

When you are caring for someone who is seriously ill and will not get better, it is helpful to know how to recognize that they are close to dying.

There are some common signs that someone is close to dying.

- They are spending long times in bed
- Moving is difficult
- Trouble swallowing foods
- Sleeping for long periods
- Not talking very much
- Confusion
- Restless (unable to remain at ease)
- Unable to tell you when they need to go to the bathroom
- Changes in breathing

If you think the person you are caring for is close to dying, your doctor or health worker will be able to help you. It is ok to phone them to ask them if they think your family member is close to dying and ask for advice on what to do.

There is no need to call an ambulance if you think the person is dying from their illness and this death is expected. If you call the ambulance then they may be obligated to perform CPR to try and revive the person, which is not helpful if the person is at the end of life.

How will we know when the person has died?

The person has died when:

- Breathing has stopped
- You cannot wake the person
- There is no heart beat or pulse
- Often the eyes are fixed open and not moving

The person may now look different to you. They may appear pale and their hands and feet may be cold – this is due to the blood no longer circulating. The jaw may drop as the muscles have relaxed. There may also be passing of urine (pee) and faeces (poo). Some air may escape from the lungs if you move the person who has passed.

If you think they have passed away, call the doctor or health worker who will come to confirm the person you are caring for has died.

It is important to get the death verified and get a death certificate. This is usually done by the General Practitioner or Doctor involved in the person's care.

CarerHelp is here when you need it.

www.carerhelp.com.au