

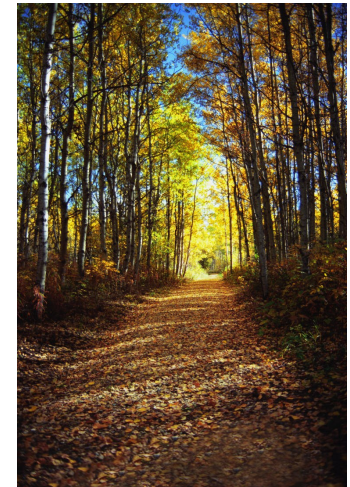
'The dying process is unique to each person, but in most cases there are common characteristics or changes that help to indicate a person is dying.'

Although one journey may be finishing, the journey for you will continue.

As you face your loss there will be a range of supports available to you.

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WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN SOMEONE IS DYING



This leaflet describes some typical features of the process of dying.

It may help to reduce anxiety about the unknown.

Try to reassure the person by talking calmly, saying who you are, and holding their hand

The dying process is unique to each person, but in most cases there are common characteristics or changes that help to indicate a person is dying.

Death usually comes gradually and peacefully, and there are many changes that signal life is coming to an end.

Most changes that occur at this time are normal and often don't need special treatment, hospitalisation or professional help. If you're unsure or concerned about anything, please talk to a doctor or nurse.

Here are some of the changes that may occur when a person is dying ...

Not eating and drinking

Eventually there will come a time when food and drink are neither wanted nor needed. This can be hard to accept, but it's a physical sign that the person is not going to get better.

Caring can be continued in other ways. Moistening the mouth may be all that is needed for comfort (using mouth swabs moistened with cool water.)

Change in awareness

As weakness increases, the person may spend more time in bed and have less interest in their surroundings. From a very sleepy state, they may lapse into unconsciousness. This may last for a very short time, or for several days.

Breathing

It's very common for the breathing patterns to change. There may be gaps of seconds or minutes between breaths, with the gaps getting longer.

Occasionally in the last hours of life there can be a noisy rattle to the breathing due to a build up of mucus in the chest that the person is unable to cough up. It isn't distressing for the person who is dying, but it might be for you. Medication and/or a change of position may help.

Incontinence

Sometimes there is a loss of control of bowel and bladder. Products will be provided by the nurse for management of this.

Increased confusion and restlessness

You may notice increased restlessness: the person pulling at bedclothes, trying to get out of bed when they are too weak to stand, muddled thinking and conversations.

Try to reassure the person by talking calmly, saying who you are, and holding their hand. Sometimes medication may be needed to calm and soothe their restlessness.

Changing colour/temperature

You may notice the person's arms and legs feel cool and clammy, and possibly look patchy and dark in colour. This doesn't necessarily mean they are feeling cold.

How will you know the person has died?

- Breathing has stopped.
- No heartbeat present.
- There is no response when you touch them or talk loudly.
- Eyes are fixed on a certain spot, pupils are dilated, and eyelids may be open.
- Jaw relaxes and mouth stays open.
- Possible loss of control of bladder and bowel movement.

What do you do when someone has died?

You don't have to do anything straight away, so you can take your time and collect your thoughts. The person may be washed and dressed in fresh clothing. There may be certain clothing and possessions that you wish to remain with the person.

You may want the help of your spiritual support person at this time. You could call him or her for assistance.

You may want family/whānau or friends to be with you to say goodbye to the person and give you support.

The nurse will help make arrangements to contact the doctor to prepare a death certificate and you will need to consider which funeral director you want to contact.