

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. This is normal.

The period of time just before death is usually peaceful, with a gentle winding down as the person 'lets go' of life. The palliative care team will work to ensure your loved one's comfort 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 of the local palliative care or domiciliary nursing service handy. You can write those details at the bottom of this form.

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. This is called the 'life extinct' form
 - **Do not ring the ambulance** – as the person was a known palliative care patient and their death was expected it is not classed as an emergency suitable for the ambulance service. **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 their loved one or conduct other ceremonies or rituals; it is your choice. It is a good idea to place your loved one straight in the bed with their dentures in place. 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 planned for any specific funeral director, your GP/community nurse may advise you who may be appropriate. Alternatively, you can look through the phone book or search online for an appropriate 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 contact your GP.

Important contact numbers

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

Funeral Director: _____ Nursing Service: _____

GP: _____