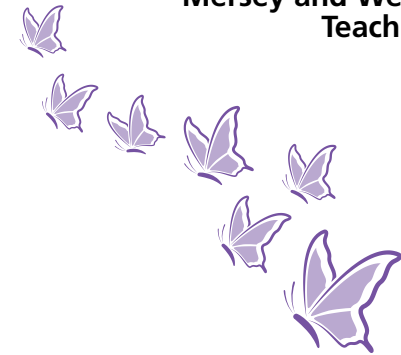




What to expect when someone is dying

Information Leaflet

If you need this leaflet in a different language or accessible format
please speak to a member of staff who can arrange it for you.

اگر به این بروشور به زبان دیگر یا در قالب دسترس پذیر نیاز دارید،
لطفاً با یکی از کارکنان صحبت کنید تا آن را برای شما تهیه کنند.

Jeśli niniejsza ulotka ma być dostępna w innym języku lub formie,
proszę skontaktować się z członkiem personelu, który ją dla Państwa przygotowuje.

Dacă aveți nevoie de această broșură într-o altă limbă sau într-un format accesibil,
vă rog să discutați cu un membru al personalului să se ocupe
de acest lucru pentru dumneavoastră

如果您需要本传单的其他语言版本或无障碍格式，请联系工作人员为您安排。

إذا احتجت إلى هذه النشرة بلغة أخرى، أو بتسقيق
يسهل الوصول إليه، يرجى التحدث إلى أحد الموظفين لترتيب ذلك لك.

www.merseywestlancs.nhs.uk

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If your relative or friend is in hospital, we have a small team of butterfly volunteers who may be available to sit with them if you can't be there. Please speak to a member of the ward team re availability of the butterfly volunteers.

Support available for you

The ward team will do their best to support you.

Visiting - you may want to spend more time with your relative or friend, and you will be welcome to visit and stay with them at any time day or night. We would advise not to have too many visitors at once, this can sometimes cause some agitation for patients. If visiting is not possible, we will help you to find other ways to keep in touch.

Memory boxes - memories and keepsakes such as a handprint or lock of hair can help you to stay connected to your relative or friend. If you would like a memory box, please ask a member of the ward team.

Butterfly volunteers - we have a small team of butterfly volunteers on some of our hospital sites who are available to sit with you, your relative or friend to provide companionship and an opportunity for you to take a break from the bedside if needed. Please speak to a member of the ward team re availability of the butterfly volunteers.

Car parking – Subsidised car parking is available from the car park payment machines or general office. A weekly pass can be purchased allowing multiple usage.

Concerns - if you, your relative or friend have any concerns please raise it with the ward team who will try their best to help. You can also contact our Patient Advisory and Liaison Service (PALS).

If your relative or friend dies in hospital

A member of the ward team will explain the next steps to you and provide you with a booklet to help guide you.

Your relative or friend will be transferred to the mortuary and their care will be continued until they are transferred to the care of your chosen funeral director.

What to expect when someone is dying

Hearing that someone close to you is nearing the end of their life and is dying is not easy. It can be difficult to remember all the information given to you at this challenging time. This leaflet may help and answer some questions that you may have. The healthcare team are also available to help and support you, so please speak to someone if you are unsure about anything or have any other questions.

Individual care and communication

Everyone is different so we cannot know exactly what will happen when an individual person is dying or predict the exact time of death. However, there are some bodily changes that may happen and being prepared can help.

If the hospital staff believe that a person is in the last hours and days of life, then an individual care and communication record will be started. This will help us to provide the best possible care that will focus on comfort and dignity. The plan will be reviewed daily, and changes made if needed. The healthcare team will keep you informed and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to be involved in your relative or friend's care, please ask.

Medication, tests, and investigations

The most important thing now is to keep your relative or friend as comfortable as possible. We may stop some medications, tests, and investigations as they may cause unnecessary distress, or are no longer helpful as the results would not change the plan of care.

If your relative or friend is unable to take medication by mouth or is too sleepy to ask, then an injection can be given. This may be done by placing a small needle under the skin, which is connected to a pump called a syringe driver. This helps to provide a regular flow of medication over 24 hours and can help avoid the distress of having too many injections.

Some symptoms a person may experience but not always is pain, agitation, breathlessness, chest secretions (increased fluid on their chest), feeling sick. New medication may be prescribed, to help treat these symptoms if they occur which you may hear being

called 'just in case medications', this is because they will only be given if they are needed and to avoid any delays if your relative or friend may need them.

Reduced food and drink

It is normal for a dying person to eat and drink less and eventually they may stop eating and drinking altogether. It can be hard to accept that your relative or friend's body no longer needs food and drink, but this is a normal part of dying,

Regular mouth care is important as your relative or friend may get a dry mouth. Very small sips of fluids, mouthwash, or a moist sponge can help.

The healthcare team will regularly review your relative or friend's needs. Small tastes for comfort and pleasure may be given if they would like, please ask a member of the healthcare team for advice. If they are unable to take fluids by mouth, sometimes a drip may be used but only if needed.

Breathing changes

Breathing may become shallower; it may get faster or slower and there may be gaps between breaths.

Sometimes the breathing may sound noisy or 'rattling'. This may be a sign that they are very relaxed while sleeping, or unconscious and unaware of the phlegm in their chest or throat or unable to cough or swallow. This may be upsetting for you to hear, but a little like snoring it doesn't usually cause them any distress. Medication can be given if needed to help clear phlegm.

At the last moments of life, a person's breathing pattern may change. Breaths may become much slower and quieter before they stop altogether. A few people may stop breathing and then the lungs may release a final breath of air or two.

Pressure relief care

If your relative or friend remains in same position for too long there is a risk of pressure ulcers or skin damage. Healthcare staff will work with you to minimise this risk and avoid unnecessarily disturbing your relative or friend. If you are worried disturbing your relative or friend will cause pain or discomfort, they can be given something to try and avoid this.

Agitation

Some people may become agitated and restless and may hallucinate. This may be a side effect of medication or other physical problems such as constipation or unable to pass urine. Medication can be given to resolve the problem. There may also be a discussion about inserting a catheter, which is a small tube which is inserted into the bladder to drain urine away. Some anxiety may be emotional being able to talk, express thoughts and feelings, ask questions or spend time with friends and family may help. Your touch and voice may be comforting as it is familiar to them. However, we would advise not having too many visitors at once as this may cause agitation for some patients.

Spiritual and faith needs

Whether you, or your relative/friend have a particular faith or not, questions, doubts, and fears around life and death, may arise and talking to someone can help. Our spiritual care and chaplaincy team are available to help and can be contacted 24 hours a day. A member of the ward team will be able to arrange this for you.

Our Sanctuary and prayer rooms are available for quiet reflection and prayer.

Providing comfort

Your friend or relative may no longer open their eyes or appear to acknowledge that they know you are there, but we believe they may do. Familiar voices and touch can provide comfort.

Combing their hair, holding their hand, and talking to them directly can help you both.

Sometimes, a one-way conversation may feel a little difficult or uncomfortable. Try telling them about your day, what your loved ones are doing or what the weather is like. Include humour, reminiscing about the memories you have made together and don't worry if you feel overwhelmed or get upset, this is ok, and it shows you care. Listening to music can also be soothing.

Looking after yourself is also important and there will be times when you need to take a break from the bedside.