

# What to expect in the last days of life

## Information for families and carers

Daytime phone: .....

Night time phone: .....

East Cheshire NHS Trust  
[www.eastcheshire.nhs.uk](http://www.eastcheshire.nhs.uk)



**@EastCheshireNHS**

**Introduction:**

The doctors and nurses looking after your loved one / friend believe that the changes in their condition indicate that they are now dying and in the last days or hours of life.

**The Care Plan for End of Life**

The care plan is used by the medical and nursing team caring for your loved one/friend to guide the delivery of high quality compassionate care which is responsive to the individual needs of your loved one/friend and to those who are important to them.

You and your loved one/friend will be given the support necessary to ensure that preferences, dignity and respect are paramount at all times, and that you feel supported. This includes involvement in discussions regarding the plan of care, and you will be able to ask questions so that you fully understand the reasons behind decisions taken.

Your thoughts and feelings are important to us so if you are concerned about decisions made or do not understand please tell us.

**Communication**

The doctors and nurses will need to ask you for your contact details to ensure you are kept informed of any changes. The staff are there to answer your questions and help you through this difficult time.

**Medication**

Medication which is no longer helpful will be stopped and new medication prescribed in order to help control any symptoms that may arise. It will be given at the right time and just enough to help the symptom.

**Comfort**

The doctors and nurses will not want to interrupt your time with your relative or friend, and they will try to ensure that as far as possible any needs are met. Please let them know if you feel those needs are not being met, for whatever reason.

You can support in this care in important ways like spending time together, sharing memories and news of friends and family.

**Spiritual Needs**

The Chaplaincy team in hospital or the GP/Community Nursing team are happy to discuss any spiritual or religious needs with you. They can offer support to all the family throughout this difficult time. Please ask as soon as possible if you would like to access this support.

**Knowing what to expect**

Not knowing what to expect can add to your anxiety. Although no one person experiences the same features when dying, it may be useful to be aware of some common features that are normally experienced.

**Reduced need for food and drink**

Loss of interest and a reduced need for food and drink is part of the normal dying process. This is often difficult to accept even when we know our loved one is dying. However, nutrition and hydration support will be given as is appropriate to their changing needs. This will be discussed with you and/ or the person who is dying and a plan put in place to meet their needs.

Good mouth care to support the comfort of a clean and moist mouth may be something that is important to your loved one/friend; you may wish to help them with this.

As part of this process, the bladder and bowel function will become less regular (urine often becomes darker in colour). The person may experience incontinence; the nurse can support and advise you in this.

**Changes in breathing**

There may be changes in the breathing pattern, becoming shallow, deep, fast or slow. There can often be long gaps between breaths. Sometimes the breathing can be noisy, which is often due to mucous on the chest. Whilst this can sound noisy (and can be upsetting to you) it does not normally cause any distress to the dying person. The doctor or nurse can discuss this with you.

**Withdrawing from the world**

Your loved one/friend may become progressively drowsy when awake, become more difficult to rouse and generally spend more time sleeping. At times they may appear disorientated and not recognise familiar faces. This can be difficult for you, but does not usually cause distress for the person as they naturally withdraw from the world

Comments, compliments or complaints  
We welcome any suggestions you have about the quality of our care and our services. Contact us: Freephone: **0800 1613997**

Phone: **01625 661449**

Textphone: **01625 663723** Customer Care, Reception,  
Macclesfield District General Hospital, Victoria Road,  
SK10 3BL

For large print, audio, Braille version or translation, contact  
Communications and Engagement on **0800 195 4194**.

**East Cheshire NHS Trust operates a smoke-free policy  
(including e-cigarettes)**

For advice on stopping smoking please contact the KICKSTART Stop  
Smoking service on **0800 085 8818**.

East Cheshire NHS Trust does not tolerate any form of discrimination, harassment, bullying or abuse and is committed to ensuring that patients, staff and the public are treated fairly, with dignity and respect.



If you have any comments about how we can improve our services please inform a member of staff in the department or complete a comment card available throughout the hospital.  
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