

What to do...

When a death is expected to happen at home, **talk to your doctor** about what you should do **before, during and after** the death. **Client's of MSCCAC** who are facing end of life and are planning for an expected death have the option (in some areas) of having an in home pronouncement of death by a Registered Nurse, where the physician is unable or unwilling to do so. The planning for the pronouncement of death at home takes place between the attending physician, the MSCCAC Case Manager, the nursing provider, the client and the family/ caregivers. A valid DNR order must be available. To learn more about this option please contact your MSCCAC Case Manager. The more you know what to do in an emergency situation the more comfortable you will feel.

After death has occurred...

- **Do not call 911** if someone has died a **natural, expected death** at home.
- **Call** your physician if they have agreed.
Tel: _____ or _____
- **Call** the R.N. as instructed by your Case Manager. Tel: _____
- **Call** someone right away to give you emotional support if you are alone.
- **Call** the funeral home you have chosen. Tel: _____
- **Call** Clergy/Spiritual Advisor
Tel: _____

Remember:

This is an expected death. **Do Not Call 911**, the **Police** or the **Fire Department**.

If Emergency Medical Services (EMS) is called, please know that until the patient is assessed and the DNR (Do Not Resuscitate order) is confirmed with the Sudbury Regional Hospital by the paramedics, by law the call is responded to as an emergency call.

Our Mission Statement

Warmhearts, Palliative Caregivers Sudbury/Manitoulin is a volunteer community based, non-profit organization whose mission is to provide end of life support to clients and their families. Our mission is achieved through hospice volunteer visiting, advocacy, education, and bereavement support to clients and families within the Sudbury Manitoulin District.



Palliative Caregivers
Sudbury/Manitoulin

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When A Loved One Is Dying

What can I Expect?



Information for Families and Friends.



Warmhearts
De tout cœur

Palliative Caregivers
Sudbury/Manitoulin

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When a Loved One is dying...

Although it is impossible to be totally prepared for a death, you may feel more comfortable if you know what to expect. Death is a natural process as the body begins shutting down. The following signs of approaching death are described to help you understand what can happen. Not all of these signs and symptoms will occur with every person, nor will they occur in any particular sequence.

We are all Unique...

This brochure is only intended as a guide and is not intended to replace advice given by health care professionals.

Physical Signs of Approaching Death...

- Loss of appetite and decreased thirst are common. The body is beginning to shut down and does not need nourishment.
- Urine output and bowel function will decrease. The person may lose control of bladder or bowel function as the muscles begin to relax.
- Sleeping more is common. It may become more difficult to waken the person. As death nears, the person may slip into a coma and become unresponsive.
- Confusion as to time, place and recognition of people is common. This can include members of the family and close friends. At times

restlessness may occur. There are many reasons for this such as decrease in oxygen circulation to the brain, changes in condition or in medications. It may be helpful to discuss these changes with your health care professional.

- Breathing patterns may change and may become noisy due to mucous collecting in the throat. You may notice shallow breath with periods of no breathing. These patterns are normal and indicate the natural progression towards death.
- Gurgling sounds, often loud, may occur when a person is unable to cough up normal secretions. This does not normally cause any pain or discomfort.
- The skin may begin to change colour and be cooler to the touch. Hands and feet may feel cool to the touch. The circulation of blood is slowing down. This does not normally cause any discomfort.

Comfort Measures...

- Talk calmly & quietly, explain all care.
- Offer small meals & sips of fluids.
- Moisten mouth frequently.
- Reposition from side to side often.
- Keep warm as needed.
- Elevate head of bed slightly.
- Sit down and hold the person's hand.
- Massage skin with lotion frequently and with every change of position unless otherwise stated by your health professional.

Helpful Hints...

- Sit with the dying person, hold their hand. Reassure the person and remind them you are there. Remember hearing remains until the moment of death.
- A calming effect may be achieved by sitting quietly while soothing music is playing or reading something comforting.
- Goodbyes are appropriate. Both the family and the person dying may find comfort in this process of "letting go".
- If wanted a member of the clergy or a spiritual advisor can provide support and comfort to both the family and the person dying.
- It is helpful if family members discuss funeral plans prior to the death. This will avoid major decisions at a very stressful time.
- Feelings such as guilt, anger, frustration or sadness are common among care-givers. These feelings are a normal response to the events you are experiencing.
- Tears are a natural expression of one's feelings.

Try to give yourself some encouragement and positive feedback. This is a very difficult time for you.

Remember you are doing the best that any person could do if they were in your place.

Remind yourself that you are brave and courageous as you go through each day.