

## Recognising Dying

### How will I know when they are dying?

Knowing that someone is now in the last days of their life can be difficult. There are some common indications that death may be very near. These may include:

- Large portions of the day being spent in bed
- Inability to move freely out of the bed or chair
- Difficulty swallowing solid foods
- Sleeping for long periods of time
- Not talking very much
- Occasional confusion
- Restlessness
- Unable to tell you when they need to go to the toilet
- Changes in breathing



If you think the person you are caring for is very close to death, speak to the doctor or other health care professional as they will be able to assist you. It is okay to ask the health care team about whether they believe the person is dying or ask when they think the person will die.

### How will I know when death has occurred?

Death has occurred when:

- Breathing stops – there are no more breaths being taken
- The person cannot be woken up
- There is no pulse or heart beat
- The person's pupils are fixed
- The person's eyes and mouth can be open or closed

The person who has died may now look different to you. They may appear pale and their hands and feet may feel cold – this is due to blood no longer circulating. Their jaw may drop as the muscles have relaxed. There may also be passing of urine and faeces. If the person's position is changed you may hear a sigh or a sound like breathing – this is due to the escape of air from the lungs.

**When you are ready, call the doctor or health care team to verify the death. If you are in the hospital or aged care facility contact one of the staff members.**

**CarerHelp is here when you need it.**  
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