

Palliative Care Pathway Family Information Sheet

Supporting care in the last hours or days of life

The healthcare team will have explained to you that there has been a change in your relative or friend's condition. They believe that the person you care about is nearing the end of his or her life.

What is a Palliative Care Pathway?

It is a plan of care to:

- provide the best care possible when a person is dying
- involve you and your relative or friend (if possible) in planning her or his care
- keep everyone focused on what is most important
- involve you and your loved one in talking about the decisions that may need to be made

You can be involved by:

- taking part in discussions with staff that will help to guide care for your loved one
- letting the staff know what would be important to your relative or friend
- providing the staff with contact names and phone numbers
- spending time with your loved one, sharing memories and news of friends and family
- letting the staff know if you feel care needs are not being met, or if there is something else we can do

What will the pathway focus on?

Comfort:

- this is very important
- staff will assess for pain, ease of breathing, confusion, a comfortable position, thirst, distress and other distressing concerns
- psychological and spiritual support for your loved one and family and friends is very important

Planning:

- to be sure that the best care possible is being provided
- to stop medications that are no longer helpful, and provide treatments and care that will assist with comfort
- to be sure medications that assist with comfort (such as pain medicine) are given only when needed, in the right dose and at the right times to provide comfort

Communications:

- to keep everyone updated, included, and aware of what is happening

Eating and drinking:

Loss of interest in food and drink is normal when someone is dying. This is often hard for family and friends to accept, as providing food is so much a part of caring for someone. Your relative or friend will be supported to eat and drink as long as they wish, and as long as it is safe for them to do so. Fluids, if needed, can be provided with a small butterfly needle under the skin (hypodermoclysis).

Decisions about food and drink will be discussed with you and your relative or friend (if possible).

A dry mouth is common and often comes from mouth breathing. Good mouth care will help this. The nurses can explain to you how mouth care is given, and may ask if you would like to help them provide this care.

What if the person seems to improve?

The Palliative Care Pathway is reviewed every 2 – 5 days and can be stopped at any time if a person improves.

Who is available to support you?

- the staff are available to support you and your loved one and answer your questions
- some areas have a Social Worker and/or a Spiritual Care person

Caring well for your relative or friend is very important to us. Please ask the staff any questions you have, even if they seem busy. All questions are important. This care may not be very familiar to you and we are here to explain, support, and help.

Unit phone number: _____

Staff numbers:

Care Manager: _____

Spiritual Care: _____

Social Worker: _____

Questions you may want to ask the doctors and nurses:
