

Spiritual and religious care

It may help you to talk to a member of our Spiritual Care and Chaplaincy Team. They come from different backgrounds, faith journeys and professions and are available to support you in a safe and non-judgemental environment. If you would like to speak to a member of the Spiritual Care and Chaplaincy Team, please let the nursing staff know.

Family support and counselling

Losing someone dear to you is extremely hard to bear. Our caring staff are on hand to help you to work through your emotions at this very difficult time. We are here to care for you, as well as your loved one. Counselling services are available for both children and adults and can be accessed initially by asking a member of the nursing team.



Grosvenor House,
Queensway, Winsford,
Cheshire CW7 1BH

Registered Charity No. 515595

T 01606 551246

Inpatient Unit direct dial 01606 555489

www.slhospice.co.uk

Final Days



Knowing what to expect



The last few days of someone's life can be distressing for family and friends as their loved one withdraws from communication, has a reduced need for food and may display physical symptoms that cause you concern but are almost certainly not causing discomfort.

The dying process is unique to each person and not knowing what to expect can add to your anxiety. It is our priority to ensure that patients receive the best possible care at the end of their life and this includes ensuring that you, their relative or close friend, also feel supported and informed at this sad and challenging time.

You will be involved in discussions regarding the plan of care for your loved one and you will be able to ask questions to help you to understand the reasons behind any decisions that are taken.

Withdrawing from the world

It is natural, towards the end of life, for your loved one to become progressively drowsy, difficult to rouse and inclined to spend more and more time sleeping. They may eventually lapse into unconsciousness. Whilst this may be difficult for you, it does not generally cause distress for them as they are gradually withdrawing from the world.

Even though your loved one may become less responsive, simply being together at this time can provide a great deal of comfort to both of you. Being with someone who cares for them will be reassuring for your loved one and help them to be peaceful during their final hours.

Food and drink

Loss of interest and a reduced need for food and drink is part of the normal dying process. The body's metabolism slows down and the body cannot digest the food so well or take up the goodness from it. This can be very distressing for the family members as food and drink are closely associated with caring for a loved one. People stop drinking and at this stage it is usually inappropriate to give foods or fluids through drips as this has little benefit and can sometimes cause distress.

Although their mouth may look dry, it is not a sign that they are dehydrated. Gently moistening their mouth and applying a lip salve will give comfort. Please discuss with the nursing team.

Breathing

In the final hours there may be changes to the breathing pattern, with breaths becoming shallow, deep, fast or slow. There can often be long gaps between breaths. Occasionally in the last hours of life there can be a noisy rattle to the breathing due to a build-up of mucus on the chest. Whilst this can be upsetting for you, it does not usually cause distress to the patient. If you are concerned, speak to a member of the clinical team who can discuss this further with you.

Medication

Medication will be reviewed and any medication that is not helpful at this time will be stopped. New medication may be prescribed to ensure the patient remains comfortable.

It may not be possible to give medication by mouth at this time so it may be given by an injection or, if needed, by a syringe pump which gives medication continuously over 24 hours. You will be kept informed of any changes.