

What to do when someone is dying



Calvary

Mater Newcastle

Continuing the Mission of the Sisters of the Little Company of Mary

What to do when someone is dying

At some time during our lives, death will touch us all. This booklet is designed to provide practical information during a period that may be difficult.

What to do when someone dies in the hospice or in the hospital

In the event of a death taking place in the hospice or hospital you may wish to contact family and friends to be with you. You and your family may like to spend some time with the deceased person.

It is possible for the deceased person to remain in their room for up to eight hours in the hospice. In the hospital this timeframe may vary. Please check with staff.

Your loved one may also be viewed at the funeral home by arrangement with the funeral director (a cost may be incurred). It is the family's responsibility to contact a funeral director of their choice.

Once you contact the funeral director they will make all of the necessary arrangements to collect the deceased person from the hospice or hospital.

Special religious or cultural needs

Traditions and ceremonies surrounding death and funerals differ from culture to culture. Advise staff if there are special needs prior to death or immediately after death.

Transporting the deceased away from the hospice or hospital

The funeral director will arrange transport of the deceased person from the hospice to the funeral home. They can also arrange to transport the deceased interstate or to overseas countries (if desired).

Each state or country has its own specific requirements, but health and consular guidelines must be followed in all cases. Extra costs will be incurred.

Belongings of the deceased

If it is your wish that certain jewellery (e.g. wedding ring, earrings, etc) not be removed, you should inform the staff as soon as possible.

You may find it more convenient to take the deceased person's belongings with you at the time of death, otherwise you may collect personal possessions within seven (7) days of the death.

Preparing for the possibility of death at home

The following applies to patients who are on the Palliative Care Outreach Service.

Medical Certification of Cause of Death

Before the deceased person is taken to the funeral home a doctor is required to visit to complete a *Medical Certification of Cause of Death*. It is important to discuss this with your GP prior to death. If the GP will not be available he/she may advise contact with an after-hours GP service.

If it has not been possible to formulate a plan with the assistance of your GP, please seek early advice from the Palliative Care Outreach Nurses. It may be helpful to document your plan below:

My Contact Plan is:

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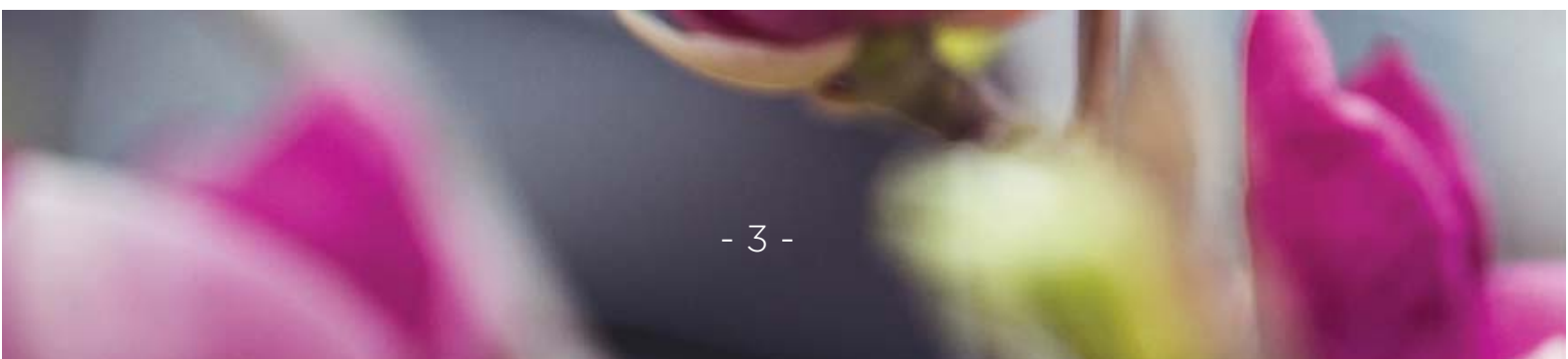
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Comments/Instructions:

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What to do when your loved one dies at home

The following applies to patients who are on the Palliative Care Outreach Service:

Firstly, take time to collect your thoughts. You do not have to call the police or an ambulance.

When you are ready, you may wish to call a friend or relative if you are alone and in need of support. Friends or relatives may also wish to spend some time with the person who has died before they are taken to the funeral home.

You may wish to contact the palliative care nurses for support.

Once everyone is ready and the doctor has visited, you can contact the funeral director of your choice. The funeral directors are usually very prompt, so do not call them until you are ready for the deceased person to leave the house.

Arranging a funeral

When faced with having to make funeral arrangements, many people have no prior experience in organising such an event, and have little idea of what to do.

A funeral may be arranged prior to death occurring. Contacting a funeral director early provides an opportunity to plan in advance and may even allow for the patient to participate in arrangements if they wish. Alternately, a funeral may be arranged after the death has occurred.

Funeral directors are listed in the yellow pages of the telephone directory.

Initial interviews with the funeral director can be at their office or in your home, depending on circumstances. At these interviews you will generally be asked what type of funeral arrangements you desire. All reputable funeral directors can help you make the funeral as simple or as elaborate as you want, and the cost will be reflected accordingly.

If the deceased is to be cremated it is necessary to advise the treating doctor around the time of death so that paperwork can be completed.

Decisions

It is possible for the family to be actively involved in designing a service that reflects the life of the person who has died. The clergy or funeral celebrant can assist with this. In the event that no service is required this can also be discussed with the funeral director.

The role of the funeral director

- Prepare the body of the deceased
- Dress the deceased in clothes of your choice
- Prepare and insert newspaper notices
- Make initial contact with clergy or funeral celebrant
- Attend to the purchase of the cemetery plot on behalf of the family
- Organise booking times of the church, cemetery and/or crematorium
- Effect registration of the death with the requisite authorities
- Obtain copies of official Death Certificate for later use by family or their legal representatives
- Organise details of the funeral service, including the supply of vehicles, pall bearers, etc
- Organise the cemetery or crematorium fees
- Discuss the purchase and payment of floral tributes on behalf of the family
- Collate all of the necessary costs in a single detailed account

Information the funeral director will require

Personal information about the deceased person including:

- Full name
- Age, date and place of birth
- Father's name
- Mother's maiden name
- Marital status
- Place of marriage and age at time of marriage (*if more than one marriage this will be required for each marriage*)
- Children's names and ages
- Type of pension (*if any*)

This information is forwarded by the funeral director to the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages in order to register the death.

After the death you may find it necessary to notify some of the following:

- Doctor
- Centrelink and/or Veterans' Affairs *(if applicable)*
- Banks, Building Societies *(if you have a joint account check with your financial institution about access to this account)*
- Retail stores if accounts are held
- Employers
- Home Care and Meals on Wheels
- Nursing Services
- Insurers *(including insurers and superannuation funds)*
- Australian Taxation Office *(a tax form will need to be completed on the deceased's behalf at the end of the first financial year following death)*
- Medicare and/or Health Funds
- Financial institutions
- Telephone companies
- Electoral Office and other State Authorities *(if applicable)*
- Local authorities (councils, gas, water and electricity companies)
- Motor Vehicle Registry
- Clubs, organisations and public services such as libraries

- Executor of Will
- Solicitor and/or Public Trustee (*if applicable*)
- Landlord (*if applicable*)
- Dentist
- Post Office
- Department of Palliative Care (*if applicable*)
- Agencies that have loaned/hired equipment. Each agency can arrange collection of their own equipment

The Death Certificate

It may be necessary to present a certified copy of the Death Certificate when closing or altering the names of accounts with organisations, banks, etc.

The official Death Certificate is issued by the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. As an additional service the funeral director can arrange for a certificate to be issued to you. Alternatively, you may take the application to the Registry yourself.

Common questions that you may wish to ask staff

- What should I say when the person that I am caring for asks “Am I dying”?
- Can you tell me when it’s getting close to the time that he/she will die?
- When should I call the rest of the family? What should I say to them?
- Could you speak with them?
- How do I know if he/she has died?
- What support is available for the family after the person dies?

Please do not hesitate to ask staff about these or any other questions you may have.

About Calvary

Calvary is a charitable Catholic not-for-profit organisation, operating across six states and territories within Australia. Established in Sydney in 1885, by the arrival of the Sisters of the Little Company of Mary in Australia, our mission is to provide health care to the most vulnerable, including those reaching the end of their life.





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