

The dying process is unique to each person, but often there are common changes which occur that indicate that a person is dying.

Most changes do not need special treatment, hospitalisation or professional help. If you are unsure, please contact the Hospice for support.

Some of the changes which may occur:

### **Not Eating or Drinking**

There will come a time when food and drink are neither wanted or needed. This can be hard to accept but it is a physical sign that the person is not going to get better.

Caring can be continued in other ways such as moistening the lips and mouth with ice chips or small amounts of water.

### **Change in Awareness**

As the person becomes weaker, the person will spend more time in bed and lose interest in their surroundings. The person may become sleepy and may lapse into unconsciousness. This may last for a very short time, or for several days.

### **Breathing**

It is very common for breathing patterns to change. There may be gaps of seconds or minutes between breaths, with the gaps getting longer.

Secretions may cause the breathing to become noisy. It isn't distressing for the person who is dying, but it might be for you. Contact the nurse for advice.

### **Incontinence**

Sometimes there is a loss of control of the bowel and bladder. The hospice has incontinence products available to help manage this.

### **Confusion/Restlessness**

You may notice increased restlessness; the person pulling at bedclothes, trying to get out of bed, muddled thinking and conversations. Hospice staff can use medication to help settle a patient who is distressed by this.

### **Change of Colour/Temperature**

You may notice the person's arms and legs feel cool and clammy. The colour may become darker or patchy. This does not mean that the person is feeling cold, but simply part of the body's process of slowly winding down.

### **How will you know the person has died?**

- Breathing has stopped
- No heartbeat or pulse
- Eyes may be fixed on a certain spot or slightly open
- Jaw relaxes, the mouth stays open.

### **What do you do when someone has died?**

- If you are in the hospice, let a staff member know and they will come to you.
- At home, you don't have to do anything straight away. Ring the hospice and a community nurse can visit if you wish, to help you. The nurse will help and advise on what to do next.
- You don't need to ring the ambulance or police. The nurse will notify the doctor for you and the doctor will complete a death certificate.
- You may like your family/whanau to be with you and perhaps some spiritual support if you wish.
- If you have not already contacted a Funeral Director, choose one from the Yellow Pages and they will help you with all the arrangements.

Each person's journey is unique to them.

Living every moment

Hospice Taranaki Inc.

If you would like additional support hospice staff can offer assistance.

## WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN SOMEONE IS DYING

For further information

### PLEASE NOTE

This brochure is intended to give you information relating to some typical features that may occur when a person is preparing for life's final stage. Our staff are available to discuss any concerns you may have.

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