

# Managing The Final Stages Of Dying

## What is it?

Managing the final stages of dying involves careful planning. It's important the person's wishes are respected. As a family member or carer, you will be supporting the person through the process. When asked, most Australians say they wish to die in their homes or residential aged care facility instead of in hospital.

## What will the GP do?

The GP will continue to check the person's health needs, medicine, home support and specialist care. The GP will make any changes to the support and care as needed. The GP may talk about the person's wishes, the process of dying, and what to expect. This includes:

- Whether the person wishes to die at home or in a hospital
- What to expect when they are dying
- How to care for them if they become distressed
- How you will know when they have died
- What you need to do after the death (you don't need to call an ambulance)
- Who to call for advice or support if you don't know what to do

Palliative care is provided in many residential aged care facilities, as well as at home. Their GP will help you learn more about the palliative care process, including:

- Strategies to manage any physical symptoms
- Medications the person may need
- Support services to help with day-to-day life
- Decision-makers who can act on behalf of the person

The GP may also complete a [NSW Ambulance Palliative Care Plan](#). This plan lets the paramedics know what they can and can't do if an ambulance is called. It is important to have this readily available in case an ambulance is called.

## What can I do?

Talk to the dying person about their wishes, and learn what's required of you before and after the death. Ask your GP who to contact if you need support or advice at any stage.

Nominate family, friends or carers who can be available if the person needs 24-hour support. Carers may need to give medication if the dying person feels distressing symptoms.

## What questions could I ask my doctor?

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| <input type="checkbox"/> What do I need to do to prepare?       | <input type="checkbox"/> Who do I call when they have died?         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> What can I expect when they are dying? | <input type="checkbox"/> What do I do after the death?              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> How will I know when they have died?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Who can I call if I don't know what to do? |



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## What supports are available?

The **South Western Sydney Palliative Care Service** offers specialist support for palliative care patients. This includes inpatient units and hospital clinics. Home visits may also be arranged in some situations.

- **Bankstown Hospital:** Phone [9722 8000](tel:97228000)
- **Liverpool Hospital:** Phone [8738 3000](tel:87383000)
- **Campbelltown Hospital:** Phone [4634 3000](tel:46343000)

## Where can I learn more?

**For general information about palliative care:**

- **Australian Department of Health & Ageing** – Palliative Care Publications: [health.gov.au](http://health.gov.au)
- **Cancer Council NSW** – Understanding Palliative Care: [cancerCouncil.org.au](http://cancerCouncil.org.au)
- **CarersNSW** – Factsheets: [carersnsw.org.au](http://carersnsw.org.au)
- **Caresearch Palliative Care Knowledge Network** - Patients and carers needs information: [caresearch.com.au](http://caresearch.com.au)

**For palliative care support in multiple languages:**

- **Multicultural Health Communication** – Palliative Care: [mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au](http://mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au)

**For a fantastic resource about emotions and spirituality:**

- **Virtual Hospice** – How do I let go of my anxiety about death and about the meaning of life?: [virtualhospice.ca](http://virtualhospice.ca)

This information is to be viewed by someone who has received a diagnosis from their doctor. It is not designed to be used to diagnose a condition or as a substitute for ongoing medical care

Health Resource Directory factsheets are endorsed by South Western Sydney PHN's Community Advisory Committee and local GPs

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