

The doctors and nurses will have explained to you that there has been a change in your relative's condition. They believe that they are now in the last hours or days of life.

The End of Life Care Plan helps doctors and nurses to give the best care to your relative. You will be involved in the discussion regarding the plan of care with the aim that you fully understand the reasons why decisions are being made. If your relative's condition improves then the plan of care will be reviewed and changed.

The Trust has implemented the Swan Scheme to represent End of Life and Bereavement Care. The scheme is symbolised by a Swan Logo, much of the work of the Swan Scheme is supported by the Swan Fund. The Fund is called The Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital Swan Fund.

Further information is available from

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

We act on your behalf when handling patient and family concerns, liaising with staff, managers and where appropriate, relevant organisations to negotiate immediate or prompt solutions. We can also help you get support from other local or national agencies.

Royal Shrewsbury Hospital, Tel: 0800 783 0057
or 01743 261691

Princess Royal Hospital, Tel: 01952 282888

NHS 111

A fast and easy way to get the right help, whatever the time. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year. Telephone: 111 (free from a landline or mobile) Website: www.nhs.uk

Patient UK

Provides leaflets on health and disease, translated into 11 other languages, as well as links to national support/self-help groups and a directory of UK health websites.

Self Help & Support Groups

A selection of websites providing access to good quality patient and consumer health information, covering specific age groups and conditions. Also includes Shropshire Community Directory which contains up-to-date information on community groups, clubs, societies, organisations, support groups and self-help groups covering Shropshire and its borders.

Website: www.library.sath.nhs.uk/find/patients/

Website: www.patient.info

Information in Other Formats

If you require this document in an alternative format e.g larger print, different language, audio or braille please contact the End of Life Care Team

Website: www.sath.nhs.uk

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The End of Life Care Team

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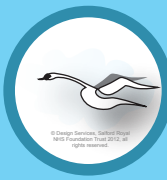
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END OF LIFE CARE

Information leaflet for relatives



Information for relatives / friends following a discussion about End of Life care



Communication

Written information leaflets like this one can be useful, as it is sometimes difficult to remember everything at this time. The doctors and nurses will ask you for your contact details, as keeping you updated is a priority. It can be very difficult to know when someone who is dying will die. For some relatives and friends it is very important that they are present at the moment of death. Others will feel they have already said their goodbyes. Please let us know your specific wishes so that we can try and make sure that they are carried out.

Medication

Medicine that is not helpful at this time may be stopped. People often find it difficult to swallow lots of tablets. Some new medicines may be prescribed and these are often given as a small injection under the skin. Medicines for treating symptoms such as breathlessness, pain or being unsettled will be given when needed. Sometimes they can be given by a small pump called a syringe pump, which can help to keep patients comfortable.

Reduced need for food and drink

Loss of interest in eating and drinking is part of the dying process and it can sometimes be hard to accept. Your relative will be supported to eat and drink for as long as they want / are able to.

If a patient is in hospital and cannot take fluids by mouth, a drip may be considered, or may

have been started before it became clear that your loved one is dying. Fluids given by a drip will only be used where it is helpful and not harmful. These decisions will be explained to you.

Good mouth care & taste for pleasure is very important at this time and can help your relative feel more comfortable. The nurses will explain to you how mouth care & taste for pleasure are given and may ask if you would like to help them give this care.

Changes in breathing

When someone is dying, their need for oxygen may lessen and the way they breathe may change. People who have been breathless may feel less breathless at this time. Their breathing may pause for a while and then start again. They use different muscles to breathe, which means their breathing may look different. Sometimes breathing can sound noisy or “rattling” because the person is no longer able to cough or clear their throat. This can sound upsetting but is usually not distressing for them.

Changes in how the person looks and behaves

During the process of dying, a person's skin may

become pale and moist. Their hands and feet can feel very cold and sometimes look bluish in colour. Dying people often feel very tired and will sleep more. Even when they are awake, they may be drowsier than they have been and they will be awake less and less. They may still be aware that family and friends are still with them so you can still talk to them.

Support for family and friends

It is sometimes easier to cope with things at this difficult time if you have someone outside your immediate family to talk to. For patients at home or in a residential home, the District Nurses, patient's GP and Clinical Nurse Specialists can offer support. For patients in a nursing home the home's nurses along with the patient's GP will offer care and support and will have arrangements with various faith representatives to provide further comfort and support. For patients in hospital or in the hospice, the ward nurses can support you or contact the Specialist Palliative Care Team / End of Life Care Team. The hospital chaplaincy is also very happy to offer comfort and support to people of all faiths or none, and can be contacted by the ward nurses or doctors.

Caring well for your relative or friend at the end of their life is very important to us. Please speak to staff and ask any questions that occur to you, no matter how small you think they may be.