

WHEN A PERSON DIES IN HOSPITAL

WHAT TO EXPECT AND WHAT TO DO NEXT

Cultural, spiritual and religious needs around the time of death

For some people there are important cultural or religious observances relating to care of the person around the time of death. Please discuss your needs with the staff prior to the time of death or else as soon as possible. Please talk with the staff who will do their best to help meet your needs when this is possible.

Pastoral care services

If you would like pastoral care or support at this time please ask your health care team to contact the Chaplaincy Service of your choice. You are welcome to bring a support person, Minister, Priest, Rabbi, Imam, Doula or spiritual advisor from your own faith or community.

How to recognise that a person has died

When death has occurred the person stops breathing and there is no heart beat or pulse. They will not respond to any stimulation. Their eyes may be open, but their pupils will be large and fixed on one spot. Their mouth may fall slightly open. Soon the skin colour changes to become pale and may be mottled. The body will become stiff and the body temperature will cool down. A person may look quite different and will become pale and cool to touch.

Spending time with your family member or friend

You may spend time (up to a few hours depending on the hospital) with the person on the ward after they have died. Ask the nurse how long you can stay. If you wish to view your deceased family member or friend after they have been moved from the hospital ward, it might be possible to view them in the hospital's morgue, during business hours. Please talk with the staff. Often it may be better to wait to view the deceased at the funeral home once they have been prepared for viewing.

What to do after your family member or friend has died

When someone dies there are many decisions and arrangements that have to be made.

1. The **Medical Certificate of Cause of Death** must be completed by the treating Medical team. The funeral director will contact the hospital to confirm when this has been done.
2. **A funeral director must be arranged.** If there are no pre-made funeral instructions, find a funeral director you are comfortable with that offers their services at a reasonable price. Contact Australian Funeral Directors Association (AFDA) in your state/territory or visit afda.org.au which has a helpful postcode search for a service near you.

Funeral Directors will usually provide services including the following:

- Registration of the death, obtaining copies of the Death Certificate for the family.
- Transportation of the body from the hospital to the funeral home.
- Preparation of the body and viewing if requested.
- Coordination between clergy (or funeral celebrant) and the cemetery or crematorium.

Please note that the person arranging the funeral is financially responsible for it and is the only person who can make arrangements with the crematorium or cemetery, including signing all burial or cremation permits (Department of Fair Trading, November 2013). Go to: www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au or ring 13 32 20 NSW Department of Fair Trading for factsheets and information in other languages.

3. **Organise financial and legal matters** and notify people and services of the death. If you need help with these please ask to see the social worker.

Notes

If at any time you have any further questions note them here and speak to your Doctor or the Nurse Unit Manager of your ward

Helpful contact numbers

	Name	Contact number/s
Nurse Manager		
Medical Officer		
Social Worker		
Interpreter Service		
Interpreter Service		

Acknowledgments: Sydney Local Health District, Family/Carer Bereavement Information Sheet. NSW Fairtrading; Aust. Government Dept. Human Services. Understanding the Dying Process, A Palliative Care Approach in Residential Care, Queensland.

