

Blackpool Teaching Hospitals **NHS**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Plan of Care in the Last Days and Hours of Life

**An information leaflet around understanding the changes as the end of life approaches**



**The nurses, doctors and other staff are here to help you as well as the person you care about.**

**The staff will try and help you work through your worries and concerns and offer you care and support at this most difficult of times.**

Relative Information Leaflet



## What is this leaflet about?

The doctors and nurses looking after your relative or friend will have explained to you that there has been a change in their condition which means that the person you are caring for could be dying and is entering the last few days or hours of their life.

We realise that thinking about the last days or hours of someone's life, especially when they are close to you is extremely difficult.

The dying process is unique to each person, but in most cases a plan of care can be put into place, to support you all. This leaflet outlines the changes you might notice and how we will provide care.

## Being involved in the care of my relative or friend?

We will do our best to take into account your relative or friend's wishes. If you know of any particular needs or wishes that they might have, please tell the staff about them.

We will work with you to maintain your relative's / friend's comfort and manage any symptoms they may have. We will keep you informed of what is happening. The plan of their care will be reviewed on a regular basis and working with you, the staff will change the care as needed.

Please be assured that we will give the best care we can to the person you are close to whether you take a hands on role or not.

## What is the aim of care at the end of life?

Our main aim of the care we provide at this time is to maintain comfort and dignity. You may notice that we stop doing regular tests and observations such as taking blood or measuring temperature. This is not because we are providing less care, but because the focus of care is comfort.

Many medications that have been used to control long term conditions can be safely stopped. Stopping them may ease the burden of taking tablets and may help people feel better as side effects from these medications fade.

Please let us know if you feel that the needs of your relative or friend are not being met, or if you have concerns about the care we are providing.

## What kinds of symptoms occur at the end of life?

People approaching the end of their life can have a variety of symptoms. Staff will regularly review the situation and take steps to keep your loved one comfortable and settled. Some common symptoms that people may experience include:

- **Pain**

Pain is not always a problem. However if your relative or friend does experience pain we will give appropriate medication to help ease it. This may be as a liquid, a tablet or an injection or via a syringe pump

- **Confusion restlessness and agitation**

If these symptoms occur they can take many forms. Your relative or friend may not recognise familiar faces or find it difficult to settle. They may not be sure about where they are. This can be a difficult experience for you. Please talk to staff if you are finding this the case.

- **Changes in breathing**

Sometimes breathing changes as the end of life approaches. You may notice long gaps between breaths. Sometimes breathing can become noisy with fluid at the back of the throat. This sound can be upsetting to hear. Please talk to staff if you are finding this the case.

- **Changes in circulation**

You may notice that your relative's or friend's skin becomes blotchy. Their hands or feet, arms or legs may feel cold to touch. This is a result of the blood circulation slowing.

## What about food and drink?

As a person becomes weaker the effort of eating and drinking may be too much. Help with feeding may be needed. Your relative or friend will be supported to take fluids and food by mouth as long as possible, but they may only manage a few spoonfuls of what is offered.

When someone stops eating and drinking it can be hard to accept, even when you know they are very unwell. Decisions about the use of artificial food and fluids at the end of life can be difficult. If you are not sure please ask staff.

## Facilities if not at home

**You should be given information to help you stay with your relative or friend. This should cover:**

- Visiting times, staying overnight, use of mobile phones, access to internet and email etc.
- Food and beverages, bathrooms and toilet facilities
- Car parking and public transport

## Information you should be made aware of

- When the person close to you is planned to be reviewed by medical and nursing teams.
- A named member of staff who will keep you informed about changes in your loved ones condition (the member of staff may be different on different days).

# Useful contact details

(Please enter the numbers that are helpful to you)

**Your GP surgery**

**Your District Nurse team**

**Your local Pharmacy**

## **Other contact numbers that may be useful:**

Community Care Co-ordination Service                      01253 955750  
(Nursing or medical help out of hours)

Trinity Hospice switchboard                                      01253 358881

Trinity Hospice Advice Line                                      01253 359359  
(for specialist advice about symptoms)

Please ask if anything is not clear to you

## Options available

If you would like a large print, audio, Braille or a translated version of this leaflet please let a member of staff know.

### **Patient Relations Department at Blackpool Teaching Hospitals**

Tel: **01253 955588**

email: [patient.relations@bfwh.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.relations@bfwh.nhs.uk)

You can also write to us at:

**Patient Relations Department  
Blackpool Victoria Hospital  
Whinney Heys Road  
Blackpool  
FY3 8NR**

Further information is available on our website: [www.bfwh.nhs.uk](http://www.bfwh.nhs.uk)

### **Clinical Director at Trinity Hospice**

Telephone number 01253 358881

email: [enquiries@trinityhospice.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@trinityhospice.co.uk)

You can also write to us at:

**Clinical Director, Trinity Hospice,  
Low Moor Road, Blackpool, FY2 0BG**

## Travelling to our sites

For the best way to plan your journey to any of the local sites visit our travel website:

[www.bfwhospitals.nhs.uk/departments/travel/](http://www.bfwhospitals.nhs.uk/departments/travel/)

[www.trinityhospice.co.uk/contact/](http://www.trinityhospice.co.uk/contact/)

## Useful contact details

Hospital Switchboard:

**01253 300000**

Trinity Hospice switchboard

**01253 358881**

Trinity Hospice helpline

**01253 359359**

## References

This booklet is evidence based wherever the appropriate evidence is available, and represents an accumulation of expert opinion and professional interpretation.

Details of the references used in writing this booklet are available on request from:  
**Policy Co-ordinator/Archivist  
01253 953397**



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