

What to do when someone dies at home

Guidance for family and carers in the event of an expected death at home



*because
you matter*

**St Nicholas
Hospice Care**

A Registered Charity No. 287773



Need to talk?

01284 766133

stnicholashospicecare.org.uk

What to do in the event of an **expected death**

If the expected death has occurred during the hours of **9am – 6pm Monday to Friday**, you will need to contact your GP surgery and explain to the receptionist as clearly as you can what has happened. They will pass this information on to a GP or healthcare professional who will arrange to visit as soon as possible to verify the death.



Outside of surgery hours you will need to contact your GP to get the emergency contact number. Explain to the call handler that an expected death has occurred and that the deceased was a palliative care patient. The call handler will then ask a series of questions, i.e. the person's name, date of birth, address and contact telephone number so that they can call you back.

When the healthcare professional contacts you they will give you an estimated time of visit.

Do not be alarmed if the healthcare professional cannot visit immediately as it may take a number of hours.

Whilst you are waiting for the healthcare professional to arrive, you may want to telephone family or friends to come and wait with you. You may also choose this time to be alone with the deceased.

Remain calm: the deceased person is at peace and no longer feeling the effects of illness. Try to glance at a clock to make a note of the time, so you are able to inform the doctor or community nurse who visits to verify the death.



When an expected death occurs at home there is no immediate rush to have the deceased person taken to the undertakers. The deceased person may be known to the community nurses and to St Nicholas Hospice Care. You may wish to contact either of these for further support and guidance at this time. The deceased person's death has to be verified either by the community nurse or a doctor before the deceased can be taken to the undertakers.

Important contacts

GP Name

GP Tel No

Community Nurse

Evening service

Out-of-hours GP provider

St Nicholas Hospice Care 01284 766133



What to do next



To **verify** a person's death the healthcare professional will need to perform some external examinations. They will use a stethoscope to listen for the heartbeat and a pen torch to shine a light over the eyes looking for a reaction in the pupil. They may also feel the person's wrist. Once verification has taken place you will be able to contact a funeral director of your choice.

Cause of Death Certificate

The Cause of Death Certificate is issued by a doctor from the deceased person's GP practice, usually within 24 hours. This certificate states the medical cause of death. Some deaths, irrespective of age, may be subject to a coroner's investigation, i.e. if the person has a notifiable disease. Verification can still take place, but the police also have to be called by the verifying GP as part of the coroner's process. The Cause of Death Certificate is unable to be issued until the Coroner's Office contacts you directly.

Please see our leaflet about coroner's investigations for more information.



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This leaflet is available in different formats upon request.
Please contact the Marketing and Communications
Department for further information on 01284 766133.

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