

What to Expect During the Dying Process

If your loved one has an advanced illness and curative care is no longer effective, it is normal to wonder—and worry—about what will happen as their condition progresses and they near the end of life.



APPETITE

Gradual decrease in appetite. Loss of taste. Reduced ability to swallow. Liquids preferred to solids. When a body is preparing to die, it is perfectly natural that eating should stop.



BREATHING

Faster or slower breathing. Shallow breathing. Pauses in breathing that grow longer and longer. Mucus pools and creates a rattly sound. These are all normal breathing patterns and do not imply discomfort.



MENTAL CHANGES

Longer and longer time spent sleeping. Decreased responsiveness. Restlessness, hallucinations, and agitation are common. Sometimes a surge of alertness.



SKIN

Dusky or bluish hue. Cool to the touch, especially around the hands and feet. Swelling of arms and legs.



URINE

Becomes darker and less than usual. Output may eventually stop completely.



DEHYDRATION

Thirst at the end of life comes from dry mouth. Alleviate thirst with good oral care.



VITAL SIGNS

Heartbeats may speed up as blood pressure goes down. Intermittent episodes of fever. Lower blood oxygen levels as breathing slows.

The hospice interdisciplinary care team can help prepare you for the physical and emotional changes that your loved one may experience and provide clinical guidance, care tips, and emotional support.

To request a hospice consultation, call **800.723.3233**