

What is end of life care?

End of life care refers to the point in a person's palliative care pathway when the person begins exhibiting signs/symptoms that suggest that they may be approaching the last week or days of life.

Common physical & psychological symptoms

Physical symptoms:

- Pain
- Nausea & vomiting
- Declining oral intake
- Declining bladder function
- Constipation
- Dyspnoea (breathlessness)
- Terminal agitation, restlessness & delirium
- Respiratory secretions
- Poor skin integrity
- Profound weakness or fatigue

Psychological symptoms:

- Depression
- Anxiety

Appropriate care & clinical strategies:

- Discontinue non-essential interventions
- Provide effective pain management – use a pain assessment tool e.g. Abbey Pain Scale, anticipatory prescribing and regular/PRN analgesia e.g. *Morphine*, *Hydromorphone* or *Fentanyl*
- Offer *Haloperidol* or *Metoclopramide* to manage nausea & vomiting
- Offer additional fluids, such as sips of water or ice chips
- Manage dyspnoea with *Morphine* or *Hydromorphone*, as well as repositioning and/or use of pillows
- Create a bowel management plan, including use of enemas or suppositories, as appropriate
- Trial non-pharmacological strategies to manage agitation & restlessness e.g. aromatherapy, music or a quiet room, followed by *Clonazepam* or *Midazolam*, as required
- Provide regular mouth care
- To prevent pressure injuries, reposition every 2-4 hours & use a foam or pressure-relieving mattress
- Use *Hyoscine Butylbromide* to dry up respiratory secretions
- Provide opportunities for the person & their family to express their concerns or fears
- Provide culturally & spiritually sensitive care

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