

Final Days and Hours



What are the signs my loved one is nearing death?

- Sleeping more and will become difficult to arouse or unresponsive
- Eats and drinks less or not at all
- Decreased urine output, urine darkens in appearance
- Confusion, speaking to people not present
- Hallucinations, restlessness
- Loss of bowel and bladder control
- Congested, loud breathing: “death rattle”
- Surge of energy, awareness
- Hands and feet feel cool and may turn blue or purple
- Breathing changes: could increase or decrease
- Changes in pulse and blood pressure

What can I do for my loved one?

- Allow them to sleep as much as desired in a safe place
- Position them for comfort
- Stay with your loved one when they are alert
- Use medications as directed by your hospice team
- Keep their mouth and lips moist
- Maintain a peaceful and calm environment
- Be present: continue to talk to and touch your loved one

What changes should I report to my hospice team?

- Changes in breathing
- Pain or discomfort
- Restlessness, anxiety
- Any needs for spiritual or emotional support

If you need help with your symptoms, call VNA 24hrs a day:

214-689-0000

How do I know if my loved one has died?

- Breathing stops and the heart stops beating, this can be a slow process in the final minutes
- Eyes and mouth can be open or closed
- Bowels or bladder might empty
- Skin may seem blue or have a waxy appearance

What should I do after my loved one dies?

Call VNA at 214-689-0000

A nurse will come and when they arrive, they will listen for breathing and a heartbeat. A notification call will be made to the medical examiner. The nurse will then call the funeral home and make arrangements for them to come and take your loved one into their care.

Your VNA team will support you in this time. A chaplain or social worker is available to support you. Additionally, there is also a 13-month period of bereavement support following the death of your loved one.

If you need help with your symptoms, call VNA 24hrs a day:

214-689-0000