

After the death

Many people who are caring for someone with advanced disease will have discussed with the health care team what to do when the person dies. Take the time you need to be with the person. When you are ready, contact your doctor or the palliative care team.

Dying in hospital, palliative care unit, or aged care facility

There is no rush; you can do things at your own pace. Spend as much time as you like with the person you were caring for. You may like to ask someone else to inform relatives and friends. You may like to call your minister, priest or other religious or cultural leader.

You can ask staff to give you some time alone. You may like to help staff with washing and dressing. They will assist you with organising the death certificate and ask you what your plans are around funerals so they can organise for the body to be moved. Remember that the staff are likely to be responsive to your needs at this time, it is okay to tell them what you need. If there are specific religious or cultural requirements around death and care of the body after death, you should let staff know.

The staff will ask you if you want to pack up the person's belongings yourself, or if you are happy with the staff packing them up.

Dying at home

There is no rush; you can do things at your own pace. Spend as much time as you like with the person you were caring for. You may like to ask someone else to inform relatives and friends.

You may like to call your minister, priest or other religious or cultural leader.

If the death has occurred at home you need to contact your doctor or palliative care service to arrange a death certificate (within 48 hours of death). Usually this is very straight forward if the person was known to a doctor. However, there are cases where the normal doctor is away or there is no doctor available. If there is not a doctor available, then the police can be called and the case will be referred to the Coroner. This means that the person's body will be moved to the Coroner's mortuary. The Coroner will read the person's medical records and try to determine the cause of death. They may or may not need to conduct an autopsy. Then the Coroner will write the death certificate.

You may also like to inform the health professionals who were providing care of the death of the person you were caring for. Depending on the services available in your area a nurse can visit to assist you.

Shortly after the death a funeral company should be notified. It is your choice as to when you would like the funeral company to come – this way you can spend as much time as you like with the person who has died.

CarerHelp is here when you need it.
www.carerhelp.com.au