

When a patient dies

It is our intention that you and your family, relative or friend receive the best possible care before and after your bereavement.

At all times dignity and individual faith requests will be followed. After the person has died, do feel that you can spend time with them if you would like to. After a short while a member of the hospital team will come and certify that the person has died. Later the nurses will prepare your relative or friend before transferring them to the hospital mortuary. Occasionally families may wish to assist the nurses at this time.

Care for you

The nurses will provide you with a booklet that explains what you need to do and how the staff in The Bereavement Office can help you. You will need to choose a funeral director and the hospital will provide a Medical Certificate of Death. If you wish to see your deceased relative after they have left the ward, this can be done later at the funeral directors. However, if you would like to do so earlier please discuss this with The Bereavement Office.

Helpful contacts

This can be a very sad and painful time and it may be helpful to talk to someone about what is happening. Those who can provide support for you include:

- Ward staff: 01225 428331
- Hospital chaplains: 01225 824039
- The Bereavement Office: 01225 824015 (Mon - Fri 10am - 3pm)
- Palliative Care Team 01225 825567 Mon - Fri 9am –4.30 pm
- Dorothy House Hospice 24 hour Advice Line 01225 722999

Facilities

Atrium Coffee Bar

9:00am - 5:30pm Mon to Fri
2.00pm - 5.00pm Sat/Sun

The Lansdown Restaurant Open daily
7.30am - 2.30pm and 5.00pm - 8.00pm

The Friends Coffee Shop
10:00am – 4.00pm Mon – Fri

Car Parking

Car parking vouchers are available for immediate family or a significant person who wish to spend long periods of time at the bedside. Please discuss with the ward

Care at the End of Life



This leaflet provides information for families and close friends, when someone is nearing the end of life in hospital. It includes information on how the dying person will be supported, information on support available for the family or close friend and useful contacts.

The staff at the Royal United Hospital are dedicated to providing the best possible care for those who are dying, respecting their privacy, dignity, choices and confidentiality.

Please feel that you can talk to staff about any concerns that you may have.

Visiting

If your relative or friend is dying you are welcome to visit at any time, or stay with them during the day or overnight. Some people wish to be there when the person is dying and others may prefer not to. However, visiting is very tiring and it is important that you look after yourself, rest and take regular meals.

Occasionally the ward may be very busy and so, to minimise disturbance to other patients and respect people's privacy and confidentiality, we may ask that you visit individually or in pairs, rather than in large groups. If you have children who would like to visit and you are unsure about this, do discuss this with nursing staff.

Sometimes a patient's condition can deteriorate unexpectedly and family and friends may not always be there at the time of death. The staff will do their best to contact you, day or night if that is your wish.

The last days of life

When a person is dying it is important that care is focused on comfort. The doctors and nurses will assess the individual needs of the dying person and identify the

priorities for supporting comfort care at this time. It is difficult to predict exactly what will happen or how fast a person will deteriorate, but needs of the dying person will be reviewed regularly.

In the last days the dying person will become weaker, sleep more and require extra care. Their need for food and fluids reduces and eventually they will no longer feel the need to eat or drink. Fluids given in a drip may no longer be appropriate if this is causing an increase in symptoms. Moistening the lips and mouth care maintains comfort and you may wish to help with this.

The person who is dying may not be able to take their tablets and so, if they do require medication, this can be put in a small pump known as a syringe driver, or given as a suppository.

Sometimes the person's breathing changes as their condition deteriorates. Occasionally they may have a noisy rattle to their breathing. This is not likely to be distressing to the patient and changing position or medication may help.

For most people, the final moments of life are very peaceful, with a gradual slowing and irregularity of breathing before it ceases.

What can you do to help?

At this time the dying person may be unconscious or asleep for long periods of time, however we always assume that he or she can hear and understand what is being said. Therefore, do feel free to talk to your relative or friend, or touch them as this can be comforting for both of you. Often just being with the person who is dying is of great support to them, as they will probably be aware of your presence.

You are also welcome to help with the care that the nurses are giving, such as simple mouth care. The nurse will be able to advise you. The nursing staff will try to balance care for the person who is dying with your need for private family time. If you do need the nurses or you are concerned about anything, do call them as they may not wish to disturb your privacy.

It can be helpful to talk to someone at this time and there are nursing staff and chaplaincy teams who are there to help. Your GP can also be of support.

The nurses will endeavour to call you, if needed, when you are not in the hospital. Please ensure that they have your correct phone number and know if they can call you day and/or night.