

Coping With Loss



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Dear patients and family members,

We know this is a painful and challenging time for you and your family, and we would like to support you during this difficult time.

This brochure contains information and a list of resources we hope will be helpful to you.

If you have any questions or concerns, please let us know. We are here to help.

When a Loved One Dies

Family members of a critically ill patient often ask what will happen when their loved one dies. We hope the following information is helpful.

Seeing and holding your loved one

Families often tell us that they appreciated the opportunity to see and hold their loved ones after death because it allowed them to say goodbye and it became a special memory for them. For some people this experience may feel natural. For others, it may seem frightening or overwhelming. You may wonder how your loved one will look or if seeing and holding him or her will become a troubling memory. We honor and support your decision, whatever it may be.

If possible, you and/or your nurse can bathe, dress and put a blanket on your loved one. We will do our best to allow you the time you need to say goodbye. Please let us know what feels right to you.

Releasing the body

Before you leave the hospital and before the body is taken to the morgue, you will receive a packet of information from hospital staff. If you have not selected a mortuary/funeral home, please see the information in this packet.



Autopsy

Your physician may ask you to permit an autopsy. An autopsy is a careful examination of the internal organs of the body. It is done to obtain additional information about the cause of death. Some family members find it comforting to have the additional information and, sometimes, this information can be used to help other patients with similar problems.

Please take time to consider your physician's request for an autopsy and feel free to consult with your family and religious/spiritual leader. You may place limits on what organs are examined. Your written consent is required to perform an autopsy. Your decision will be respected.

If you consent to an autopsy, a pathologist who specializes in this area of medicine will perform the procedure in the hospital. Following the autopsy, the body is kept at the hospital until it is released to the mortuary/funeral home for burial or cremation and will not interfere with your funeral or burial plans. There will be no change in your loved one's appearance if you wish to have an open casket.

Preliminary autopsy results are provided in two working days, but the complete report usually takes about three months. We suggest that you schedule an appointment with your physician to learn the results of the autopsy, as it can be helpful to discuss the findings and any questions you may have.

Military service

Persons who have served in the Armed Forces, were honorably discharged and meet other service requirements may be entitled to a Veteran's burial. For information, contact the L.A. County Veteran's Affairs Office at (213) 253-2677. For information on Military, Veterans or Social Security benefits, contact your funeral director.

Organ donation

If you have any questions or concerns about possible organ donation, please feel free to discuss them with the medical team.



Death certificates

You can obtain death certificates from the mortuary/ funeral home or cremation society that your family uses. You may want to ask for several official copies of this document. In the future, you can acquire additional copies from the L.A. County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk: Death Records Section; P.O. Box 489, Norwalk, CA 90651-0489. For more information, call (562) 462-2137.

Medical records

When a patient dies, his or her electronic health records become inactive. Families who would like to obtain the patient's medical records should send a written request to UCLA Health Information and Management Services, 10833 Le Conte Ave., Suite BH-255, Los Angeles, CA 90095. You may also fax your request to (310) 825-3356 or call (310) 825-6021 for further information.

Religious customs

If you would like a place and time for prayer, meditation or a ceremony, you may do so in a quiet area in the hospital, in the hospital Meditation Room/Chapel or at the patient's bedside. Your own religious/spiritual leader is welcome to join you at any time. The Department of Spiritual Care is also available.

To contact the chaplain, call the Department of Spiritual Care or ask your nurse to page the chaplain. If you want to have your loved one blessed or baptized, please feel free to discuss your wishes with the chaplain.



UCLA Services and Amenities

Westwood

Care coordination (310) 267-9700

Clinical social workers can assist you and your family members with any personal, emotional and/or family problems and difficulties due to a patient's illness or injury. Social workers can arrange individual, family and group support for sudden illness, separation from home and job, bereavement, substance abuse, domestic violence and other issues, and they can provide referrals to community resources.

Support groups

UCLA offers support groups and other educational programs. Please ask your social worker about any programs that may benefit you or your family.

Chase Child Life Program (310) 267-9440

Child Life/child development services are available to provide counseling and emotional support for chronically- and acutely-ill children and their families during medical events. Through play, education and other therapeutic interventions, children and their families have the opportunity to develop positive coping skills, increase understanding, optimize developmental potential and express concerns. Child Life specialists provide individualized and group therapeutic intervention at the bedside or in pediatric activity areas on a regular basis.

Office of Decedent Affairs (310) 825-7846

The Office of Decedent Affairs takes care of your loved one's body until arrangements are made with a mortuary or funeral home. After business hours and on weekends and holidays, the Nursing Staffing Office will assist you with this process. The Nursing Staffing Office can be reached at (310) 267-9671.

Interpreter services (310) 267-8001

The UCLA Health Interpreter/Translation and Deaf Services Program is available to all UCLA Health inpatients, outpatients and their relatives. Every attempt is made to provide services in the patient's native language by interpreters who can be available in person, by telephone or through Video Tele-Interpretation technology. Written translations of certain medical documents, correspondence and patient-education materials are available. However, in-house translation services are limited and some requests will be referred to outside agencies and translators.

Massage therapy (310) 206-3055

Massage therapy for relaxation and stress reduction is available for patients and families. Ask your nurse for more information.

Spiritual care (310) 825-7484

Hospital chaplains can meet with you to support your spiritual care needs, listen to your concerns, share in your faith struggles, assist you in seeking inner peace and strength, provide grief support, bring you Scriptures or holy writings from your faith tradition, help you receive religious sacraments, contact religious leaders from your faith tradition and help with other spiritual needs. For after-hour urgent requests, ask the nurse to page the on-call chaplain.

uclahealth.org/spiritualcare

Meditation Room/Chapel

The Meditation Room/Chapel offers a place for meditation, prayer and quiet reflection inside the Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center. The Meditation Room/Chapel is located to the right of the main entrance.

Garden of Peace

The Garden of Peace, just outside the Meditation Room/Chapel, offers a tranquil outdoor retreat for patients and their families to enjoy.

People-Animal Connection (PAC) Program

(310) 267-8184

PAC is a volunteer group that provides animal-assisted therapy and companionship to aid in the comfort and healing of critically ill patients and their families at Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center. Evidence shows that patients who receive PAC visits have lower blood pressure, quicker healing and recovery times, improved results from physical therapy and better mental well-being. Patients must receive medical clearance for a pet visitation.

UCLA Integrative Therapy Program

An integrative therapy session incorporates three gentle healing modalities — Reiki, essential oil therapy and yoga — to address the primary symptoms of pain, anxiety, nausea, insomnia, constipation and exhaustion. Ask your nurse for more information.

UCLA Donated Body Program (310) 794-0372

An individual who is at least 18 years of age may make an anatomical gift to the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA Donated Body Program by completing the applicable forms and returning the originals to the office. There is no cost to the patient's family, though families may choose to have a funeral provider coordinate memorial services at their own cost. Under some circumstances, a spouse, registered domestic partner, attorney-in-fact or children of the donor may make a donation at the time of death. Further information about the program is available on the website. For additional resources and information on other body donation programs, please contact your social worker.

E-mail: DBPinfo@mednet.ucla.edu
donatedbodyprogram.ucla.edu



Santa Monica

Care coordination/Clinical social work

(310) 319-4640

Clinical social workers can assist patients and family members with any personal, emotional and/or family problems and difficulties due to illness or injury. Social workers can arrange individual, family and group support for sudden illness, separation from home and job, bereavement, substance abuse, domestic violence and other issues, and they can provide referrals to community resources.

Spiritual care (424) 259-8170

Hospital chaplains are available to meet with you to process your experiences and feelings, and to share your faith reflections in light of your grief and loss. The chaplain will help close your hospital experience with prayer, sacred rituals or sacraments, and will help you navigate the next steps in the journey of adapting to life's changes. A chaplain is available 24 hours a day for hospital patients Monday through Friday from 8 am to 5 pm. For after-hour requests, ask the nurse to page the on-call chaplain.

Chase Child Life Program (424) 259-8219

Child Life services provide counseling and emotional support for chronically and acutely ill children and their families. Through play, education and other therapeutic interventions, children and their families can develop positive coping skills, increase understanding, optimize developmental potential and express concerns. Child Life specialists provide individualized and group therapeutic interventions at the bedside or pediatric areas on a regular basis.

UCLA Donated Body Program (310) 794-0372

An individual who is at least 18 years of age may make an anatomical gift to the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA Donated Body Program by completing the applicable forms and returning the originals to the office. There is no cost to the patient's family, though families may choose to have a funeral provider coordinate memorial services at their own cost. Under some circumstances, a spouse, registered domestic partner, attorney-in-fact or children of the donor may make a donation at the time of death. Further information about the program is available on the website. For additional resources and information on other body donation programs, please contact your Social Worker.

E-mail: DBPinfo@mednet.ucla.edu
donatedbodyprogram.ucla.edu



Harman Garden Plaza

Harman Garden Plaza, located on Wilshire Blvd., between 15th and 16th Streets, offers a tranquil outdoor retreat for patients and their families.

Interpreter services (424) 259-9130

The UCLA Health Interpreter/Translation and Deaf Services Program is available to all UCLA Health inpatients, outpatients and their relatives. Every attempt is made to provide services in the patient's native language, either by an in-person interpreter or by telephone. Written translations of certain medical documents, correspondence and patient-education materials are available. However, in-house translation services are limited, and some requests will be referred to outside agencies and translators.

Massage therapy

Massage therapy for relaxation and stress reduction is available for patients and families by UCLA therapists. Ask your nurse for more information.

Meditation Room/Chapel

The Meditation Room/Chapel is located on the ground level of the central wing, near the main lobby. Healing gardens are also accessible from the main corridor after you pass through the lobby.

Office of Decedent Affairs (424) 259-8385

The Office of Decedent Affairs takes care of your loved one's body until arrangements are made with a mortuary or funeral home. The nursing supervisor will coordinate the paperwork, pick up and transport once you have chosen a mortuary or funeral home. The Nursing Supervisor is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

People-Animal Connection (PAC) Program (310) 267-8184

PAC is a UCLA Health volunteer group that provides animal-assisted therapy and companionship to aid in the comfort and healing of critically ill patients and their families at UCLA. Evidence shows that patients who receive PAC visits have lower blood pressure, quicker healing and recovery times, improved results from physical therapy and better mental well-being. Patients must receive medical clearance for a pet visitation.

Support groups

UCLA offers support groups and educational programs. Please ask your social worker, nurse or physician about any programs that may benefit you or your family.



