

What You May See When Your Family Member Is Dying

Dying is a personal, unique experience. When you have questions, your medical team is here to help.

As your family member nears their end of life, their body may change in these ways:

Movement: They may slowly stop moving. If they seem uncomfortable, gently reposition them. Sitting up or in a chair may be more comfortable.

Understanding: They may become less aware of people and surroundings.

Confusion: They may feel confused or see things that are not there.

Hunger: They will stop feeling hungry. This is normal and we respect their choices about eating or drinking.

Incontinence: They may lose bladder or bowel control. Keep them clean and comfortable.

Sight: They may have trouble seeing or keeping their eyes closed. Bright lights can be uncomfortable. Keep the room calm and softly lit.

Hearing: Hearing and touch often fade last. Talk to them or play their favorite music. Turn off monitors to create a peaceful space.

Signs in the last hours to days:

Skin changes: Their hands and feet may turn purple or blue, and their skin may look pale yellow.

Breathing: May slow down or pause for 10-30 seconds.

Fluids: A rattling sound may occur as they lose the ability to swallow. Medication and positioning can help.

Behavior: Your family member will likely stop interacting with you before they die.

Heart rate: Their heart rate may speed up or slow down.

Temperature: Their hands and feet may feel cool or sweaty.

How you will know they have died:

There will be no breathing or heartbeat.

Their eyes will stop moving and may not close fully.

Their jaw relaxes and the mouth may be slightly open.

If you notice these signs, tell your medical team. We will guide you through the next steps. We will do everything possible to manage symptoms and ensure comfort during this time.