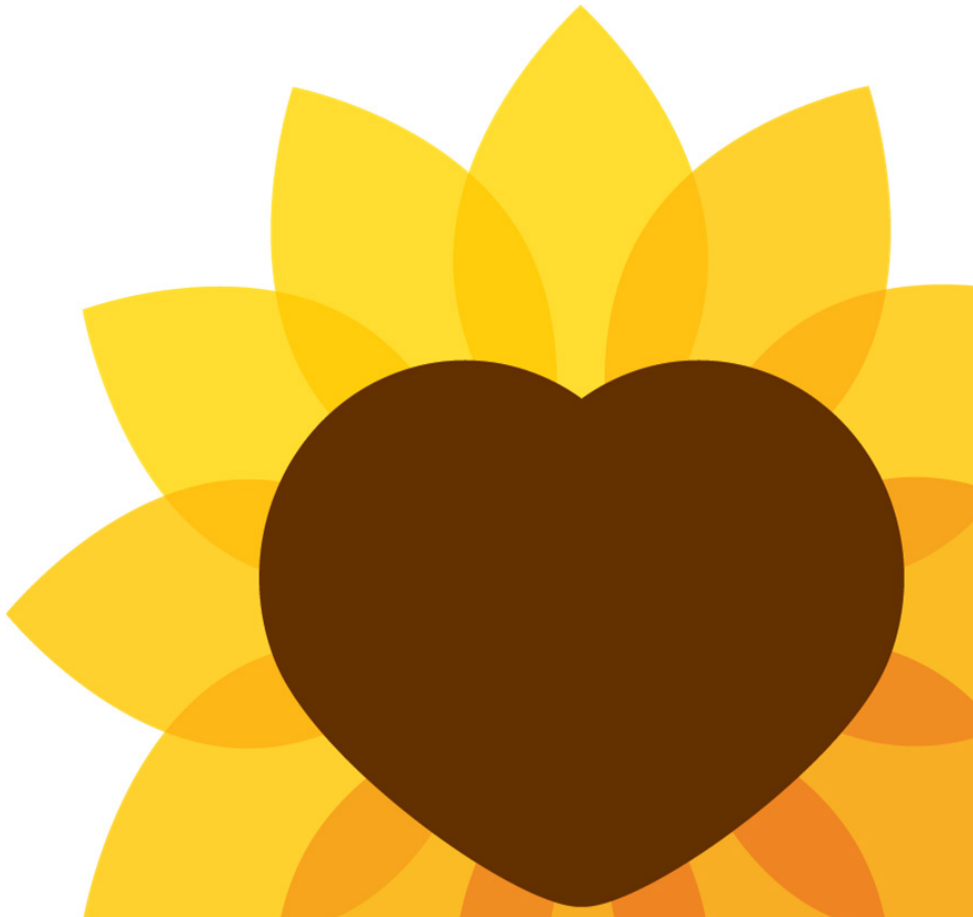




East Cheshire
Hospice

What to expect in the last days of life

Information for families and carers



Introduction

The doctors and nurses looking after your loved one/ friend, believe that the changes in their condition indicate that they are now dying and in the last days or hours of life.



Care plan

A care plan for end of life is used by the medical and nursing team caring for your loved one/friend to guide the delivery of high quality compassionate care which is responsive to the individual needs and to those who are important to them.

You and your loved one will be given the support necessary to ensure that preferences, dignity and respect are paramount at all times, and that you feel supported. This includes involvement in discussions regarding the plan of care, and you will be able to ask questions so that you fully understand the reasons behind decisions taken. Your thoughts and feelings are important to us so if you are concerned about decisions made or do not understand please tell us.

Communication

The doctors and nurses will need to ask you for your contact details to ensure you are kept informed of any changes. The staff are there to answer your questions and help you through this difficult time.

Medication

Medication which is no longer helpful will be stopped and new medication prescribed. It will only be given at the right time and just enough to help with symptoms.

Comfort

The doctors and nurses will not want to interrupt your time with your relative or friend, and they will try to ensure that as far as possible any needs are met. Please let them know if you feel those needs are not being met, for whatever reason.

You can support in this care in important ways like spending time together, sharing memories and news of friends and family.

Spiritual needs

The chaplaincy team or the nursing team in the Hospice are happy to discuss any spiritual or religious needs with you. They can offer support to all the family throughout this difficult time. Please ask as soon as possible if you would like to access this support.

Knowing what to expect

Not knowing what to expect can add to your anxiety. Although no one person experiences the same features when dying, it may be useful to be aware of some common features that are normally experienced.

Reduced need for food and drink

Loss of interest and a reduced need for food and drink is part of the normal dying process. This is often difficult to accept, even when we know our loved one is dying. However nutrition and hydration support will be given as is appropriate to their changing needs.

Good mouth care to support the comfort of a clean and moist mouth may be something that is important to your loved one; you may wish to help them with this.

As part of this process, the bladder and bowel function will become less regular (urine often becomes darker in colour). The person may experience incontinence; the nurse can support and advise you in this.

Changes in breathing

There may be changes in the breathing pattern, becoming shallow, deep, fast or slow. There can often be long gaps between breaths. Sometimes the breathing can be noisy, which is often due to mucous on the chest.

Whilst this can sound noisy (and can be upsetting to you) it does not normally cause any distress to the patient. The doctor or nurse can discuss this with you.

Withdrawing from the world

Your loved one /friend may become progressively drowsy when awake, become more difficult to rouse and generally spend more time sleeping. At times they may appear disorientated and not recognise familiar faces. This can be difficult for you, but does not usually cause distress for the person as they naturally withdraw from the world.

Notes

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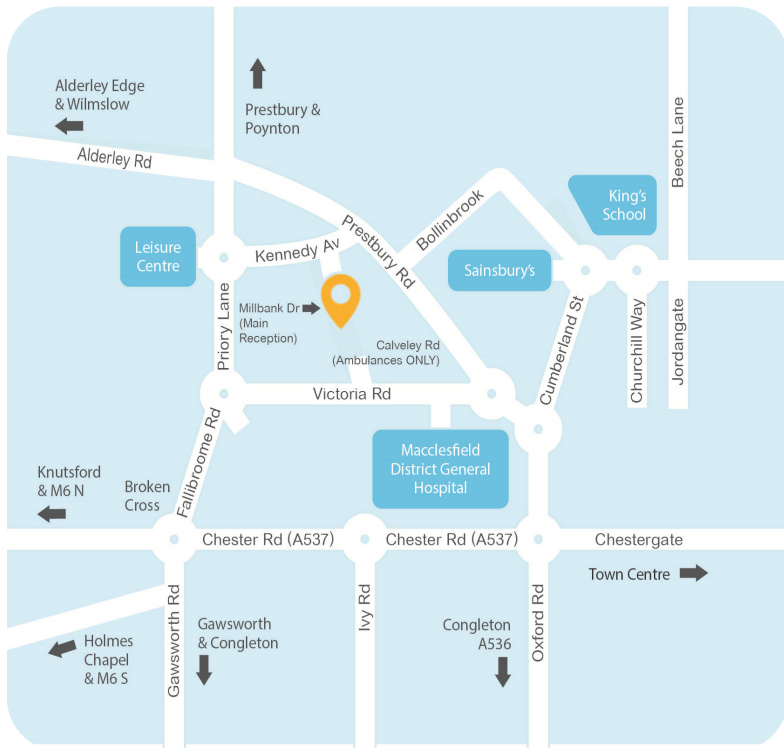
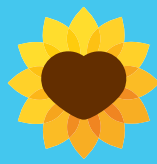
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