



End of life care

Information for people living in or visiting the residential aged care facility

The goal of end of life care is to maintain comfort and to address the emotional, spiritual, and cultural needs of the person and their family.

Dying is a normal part of life and a human experience.

It is human nature to fear death, and as a society we are reluctant to talk about death. This often prevents planning for end-of-life care and may result in end-of-life preferences not being known or followed.

Planning and making decisions about the end of life can be a positive experience for everyone and makes it easier to put things in place according to the person's wishes and preferences.

The goals of end of life care

An individualised approach to care in the last days or hours of a person's life is important to ensure a 'good death'.

As such, the goals of end-of-life care are to:

- support choice and respect wishes
- minimise distress and suffering
- provide comfort through the best control of pain and symptoms as possible
- provide spiritual and emotional support
- provide culturally appropriate care
- provide information and support and preserve dignity.

Ways to be involved in end of life care

Make sure personal preferences are known by family, friends, and aged care staff. For example, special music playing, facing a window to look outside, or having people sit close by.

Individual preferences should be documented in an advance care directive or plan so that everyone is aware of wishes and choices. Inform staff if you would like to update your preferences at any time.

Family meetings can be held to discuss your wishes.

Family and friends are encouraged to spend as much time with you as they can.



Working together

You and your family and friends know what is important for you. You are important members of the care team.

Family and friends may be the first to notice changes in your health and can let staff know about their concerns.

Working with the staff will help in managing your symptoms and ensuring that preferences of you and your family are adhered to.

Talk to staff and ask questions. They need your help to give you the best possible end of life care.

Questions to ask staff

There are questions you might like to ask staff. Here are some questions, but you, your family and friends will have your own thoughts about what is important to you at end of life.

- Are my preferences regarding end of life care known and documented in an advance care directive or plan?
- If my end of life preferences change, how is my plan revised and who is involved?
- Can a pastoral care or religious minister be organised to visit?
- Will I have pain and how will my pain be managed?

Your family and friends may have questions too.

- How will staff inform us when they think my family member or friend is dying very soon?
- Will we have enough time to get to the aged care facility?
- Can we stay in the facility? Will someone be with my family member or friend when they die if I am unable to be there?
- What happens after my family member or friend dies?
- Will a doctor come when my family member or friend has died?
- What support options are available?



Want to know more?

Read about [palliative care end of life services](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/servicesandsupport/end-of-life-and-palliative-care-services) on Better Health Channel <www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/servicesandsupport/end-of-life-and-palliative-care-services>.

Disclaimer: This health information is for general purposes only. Please consult with your doctor or other health professional to make sure this information is right for you.

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Available from the [Department of Health residential aged care information web page](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/residential-aged-care/participating-with-consumers)

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