



Checklist

Imminent Death – How to Respond

- Do you recognise the clinical signs when someone is close to death? People deteriorate and will eat and drink less, have less energy and spend more time sleeping. When they are close to death you are likely to see a change in their colour, circulation or breathing patterns. They will be cool at the extremities.

- The following Fast Fact (#149) from the Palliative Care Network of Wisconsin may be helpful to facilitate discussions with all staff about Teaching the Family what to expect when the patient is dying: <https://www.mypcnow.org/blank-dvp5k>

- Be respectful at all times when caring for someone who has died. They remain your patient even after death. Many nurses will still talk to patients when laying out and preparing their body or attending to them after death.

- Does a colleague request the need to debrief following their involvement with a patient who has died? Set aside some time to listen to your colleague's experiences and challenges. Share your own experiences if appropriate. Reflect on what you can learn from your colleague's experience. If you are concerned about your colleague, remind them of available support. In the first instance they can talk to their line manager. Other support options might include the Employee Assistance Scheme or talking to their GP about a Mental Health Care Plan.

- Make yourself aware of the ACSQHC End-of-Life Care Audit toolkit. Find the person in your organisation responsible for QA and bring it to their attention: <https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/audit-toolkit-home/>

For resources go to the My Toolkit pages in End-of-Life Essentials website: <https://www.endoflifeessentials.com.au/>

Resources

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From CareSearch – [Changes at the time of Death](#)

The following Fast Facts from the Palliative Care Network of Wisconsin may be helpful:

- [Fast Facts #3 Syndrome of Imminent Death](#)
 - [Fast Facts #109 Death Rattle and Oral Secretions](#)
 - [Fast Facts #118 Near Death Awareness](#)
 - [Fast Facts #149 Teaching the Family what to expect when the patient is dying](#)
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An article from Nursing Times (UK) [Personal care at the end of life and after death](#)

From the Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne: [Procedures at time of death in hospital](#)

From the Better Health Channel: [Death in Hospital](#)

End-of-Life Essentials: [Glossary of terms](#)

End-of-Life Essentials Able versus Novice: [Which one are You?](#)

Resources

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Further Reading

Cohen-Mansfield J, Skornick-Bouchbinder M, Brill S. Trajectories of End of Life: A Systematic Review. *J Gerontol B Psychol Sci Soc Sci*. 2018 Apr 16;73(4):564-572. doi: [10.1093/geronb/gbx093](https://doi.org/10.1093/geronb/gbx093)

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Dicks SG, Ranse K, van Haren FM, Boer DP. In-hospital experiences of families of potential organ donors: A systematic review and qualitative synthesis. *Health Psychol Open*. 2017 May 22;4(2):2055102917709375. doi: [10.1177/2055102917709375](https://doi.org/10.1177/2055102917709375).

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Devery K, Rawlings D, Tieman J, Damarell R. Deathbed phenomena reported by patients in palliative care: clinical opportunities and responses. *Int J Palliat Nurs*. 2015 Mar;21(3):117-25. doi: [10.12968/ijpn.2015.21.3.117](https://doi.org/10.12968/ijpn.2015.21.3.117)

Bloomer MJ, Ranse K, Butler A, Brooks L. A national Position Statement on adult end-of-life care in critical care. *Aust Crit Care*. 2021 Aug. Epub ahead of print. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aucc.2021.06.006>