



End-of-Life Care at Home

A Caregiver Guide



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Content

Once you have made the decision to bring your loved one home, you may use this guide when providing care for him or her at home. This guide provides useful information on:

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Home Hospice Services

To support your family in caring for your loved one after going home, the hospital medical team will make a referral to get a home hospice team on board.



What will the home hospice service do?

- Assess the patient's condition
- Review and adjust medications to maintain comfort
- Provide caregiving advice

The frequency of subsequent visits will depend on ongoing progress and needs.

When will the home hospice team visit after discharge?

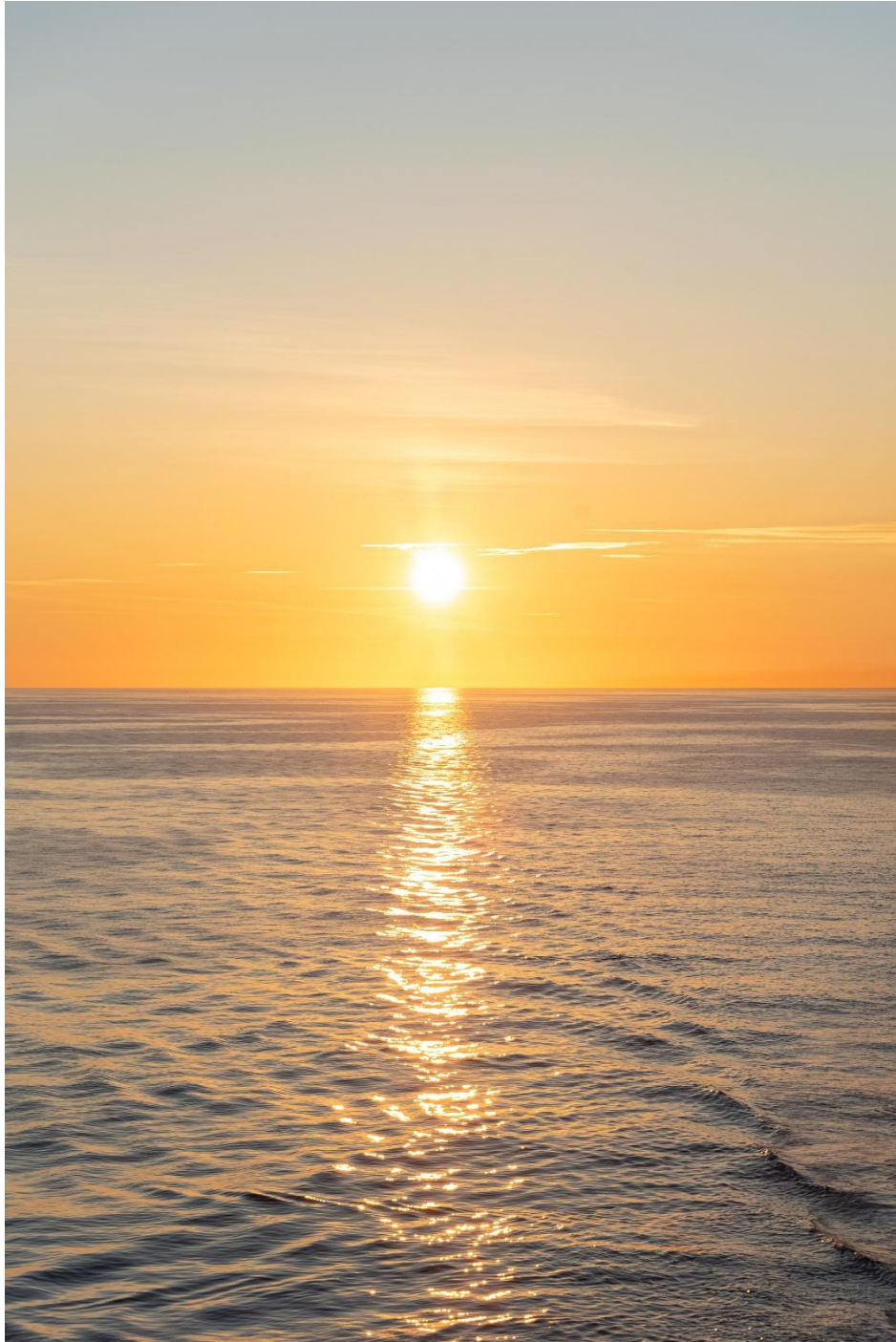
- The hospital team will arrange with you and the hospice team before discharge
- The home hospice team will visit within the same day or by the next working day if possible
- There is no immediate support from hospices for new cases on weekends and public holidays

How do I contact the home hospice team?

- You will be provided with the contact number during their first visit
- The home hospice team is contactable at all times, but they do not provide 24-hour bedside nursing care
- Do contact them if you need clarifications on the care of your loved one, or face unanticipated problems

Understanding The Final Hours

The “final hours” refers to the period just before death occurs. It may range from the last hours to short days.



As your loved one approaches their final hours, he/she will eat less, spend more time sleeping, and lose interest in activities they used to enjoy. Not every dying person shows all of the physical signs listed here; these can vary from person to person.

Physical signs to look out for:

Lowered body temperature – The limbs become cool to touch, especially in the fingers and toes. Mottling, or purplish blue discolouration may appear at the palms and soles of their feet.

Sleeping excessively – Your loved one may become very sleepy and eventually not respond to you.

Not eating or drinking – As the body system slows down, your loved one may no longer have interest in food. If still alert, you may feed him/her small teaspoons of their favourite drinks or food to enjoy the taste. Refrain from feeding if he/she is drowsy, as they may choke.

Confusion – Your loved one may appear restless and uncomfortable as they fidget in bed, gesture with their hands or speak incoherently. However, confusion does not happen in all dying persons.

Change in breathing pattern – Your loved one will tend to breathe with their mouth open as their muscles become more relaxed. Some may develop deep, rapid breathing alternating with periods of shallower breathing. The deep, rapid breathing may be followed by a pause before breathing resumes again. He/she is usually not aware of changes in breathing pattern, and is largely undisturbed by it.

Gurgling throat sounds – You may hear some gurgling sounds as your loved one breathes. This is because they have lost the ability to swallow saliva. The dying person is usually unaware and hence not distressed by this.

During the final hours, blood pressure and oxygen level readings are expected to be abnormal. At this juncture, frequent checks will not be helpful. It is more important to ensure that your loved one looks comfortable.

What Can I Do At The Bedside?

Offer assurance

Hold your loved one's hand and speak gently into his/her ear. Use short, simple sentences to reassure your loved one that you are by his/her side and he/she will be cared for.

Orientate your loved one by telling him/her the day of the week, the hour of the day and what has been happening in your life. You can reminisce the happy past with him/her.



You may also wish to express your feelings. Four important things you may want to say:

- Please forgive me
- I forgive you
- Thank you
- I love you

Music/Prayers

You can play calming music or their favourite tunes softly in the room. Prayers can also be recited to provide spiritual reassurance.

Massage

Your loved one may appreciate being massaged during this time. You can use his/her usual moisturisers to gently rub into the skin. However, do check with your healthcare professionals before massaging.

Mouth care

Keeping your loved one's mouth clean and fresh improves the sense of well-being. Use moist cotton sticks to clean and moisten the mouth. If the mouth is dry, apply moisturising mouth gel. Check with healthcare professionals if you are unsure how to do this. If your loved one becomes drowsy, remove his/her dentures, if any.

Eye care

Apply eye drops or eye gel regularly to prevent drying out of the eyes.

Skin care

Use a wet towel to clean the face, and change clothes and bed linen regularly. Gently reposition or provide appropriate padding to avoid prolonged pressure on contact points like buttocks or ankles. Use a barrier cream after diaper change, to protect the skin.

If your loved one appears uncomfortable at any point in time, or if the caregiver is unsure of what to do, contact the Home Hospice Team for help.

Managing Specific Symptoms

(Refer to medication package for dosage and timing)

Pain

- Ensure nothing is causing discomfort (e.g. diaper cutting into skin)
- Play soothing music or use aromatherapy
- Gently massage over limbs, forehead, or near site of pain to relieve tension

- ☐ Give regular medication as ordered

State medication: _____

If extra doses of medications are needed:

- ☐ Inject **MORPHINE as ordered**
- ☐ Inject **FENTANYL as ordered**
- ☐ Inject **OXYCODONE as ordered**
- ☐ Alternatively, administer _____

If still not better after 3 consecutive doses:

- ☐ Call the Home Hospice Team for advice

Breathlessness

- Use a fan and direct airflow at face
- Ensure that the room is well-ventilated
- Use oxygen as instructed

- ☐ Give regular medication as ordered

State medication: _____

If extra doses of medications are needed:

- ☐ Inject **MORPHINE as ordered**
- ☐ Inject **FENTANYL as ordered**
- ☐ Inject **OXYCODONE as ordered**
- ☐ Alternatively, administer _____

If still not better after 3 consecutive doses:

- ☐ Call the Home Hospice Team for advice

Constipation

- Gently massage the abdomen in a clockwise manner

- ☐ Give **BISACODYL SUPPOSITORY** through the anus as ordered, if no motion passed for 3 days

If still not better,

- ☐ Call the Home Hospice Team for advice

Medication doses or types may be changed by the Home Hospice Team depending on your loved one's condition. If in doubt, call your Home Hospice Team for advice.

Noisy throat secretions

- Raise the head and upper chest using pillows, or turn your loved one to one side
- Place a small towel close to the mouth for secretions that flow out
- Avoid deep suctioning as this may cause discomfort

If not better despite above,

- ☐ Inject **HYOSCINE BUTYLBROMIDE / BUSCOPAN** as ordered
- ☐ Alternatively, administer _____
- ☐ Call the Home Hospice Team if still not better after 3 consecutive doses

Confusion or Restlessness

- Identify yourself when speaking to your loved one
- Speak softly, naturally and clearly
- Lightly massage the hands or forehead
- Maintain a pleasant room atmosphere
- There is no need to correct confused thoughts, as this may increase distress

If not better despite above,

- ☐ Inject **HALOPERIDOL** as ordered
- ☐ Alternatively, administer _____

If still not better,

- ☐ Call the Home Hospice Team for advice
- ☐ Inject **MIDAZOLAM** as ordered

Seizures

- Turn your loved one to his or her side
- Do not restrain his/her actions, and do not put anything in the mouth
- Keep track of how long the seizure lasts
- Inform the Home Hospice Team

- ☐ Give **DIAZEPAM ENEMA 10mg** through the anus if the seizure lasts **more than 5 minutes**. If not better after 15 minutes, give another **DIAZEPAM ENEMA 10mg**

If still not better,

- ☐ Call the Home Hospice Team for advice
- ☐ Inject **MIDAZOLAM** as ordered

When Death Occurs

How do we know our loved one has passed away?

You can look out for the following signs:

- There is no breathing
- No pulsation is seen over the neck
- The eyes are fixed in one direction
- The body gradually becomes cool to touch

What should I do once death occurs?

- Stay calm
- Watch 10 minutes to confirm breathing has stopped
- Allow yourself some quiet moments
- Take your time to inform other family members and friends
- Registration of death can be done later, up to and within 24 hours

For coroner's case

- Call the police at 999
- Inform the police that there is a death at home
- Provide the police with memo given to you upon discharge from hospital stating this is a coroner's case

Practical Matters

Arrange for death certification

Call your family physician or a general practitioner who is able to make a home visit to certify death



When the doctor arrives

- Provide the doctor with the memo from hospital
- Doctor will certify death online after examining your loved one
- Immigration & Checkpoint Authority system is automatically updated
- Doctor will provide you with digital death certificate number

How do I retrieve the digital death certificate?

- Retrieve the death certificate from My Legacy Portal at <https://mylegacy.life.gov.sg/>
- Information needed: the digital death certificate number, your loved one's NRIC number, and date of death
- Download and store the certificate in your personal device

What do I do next?

- Contact the casket company. They will assist and guide you through the necessary arrangements
- Contact your religious leader if needed, depending on your loved one's religion and cultural practices
- Inform family and friends. Do not hesitate to ask for help where needed

What do I do with leftover medicines?

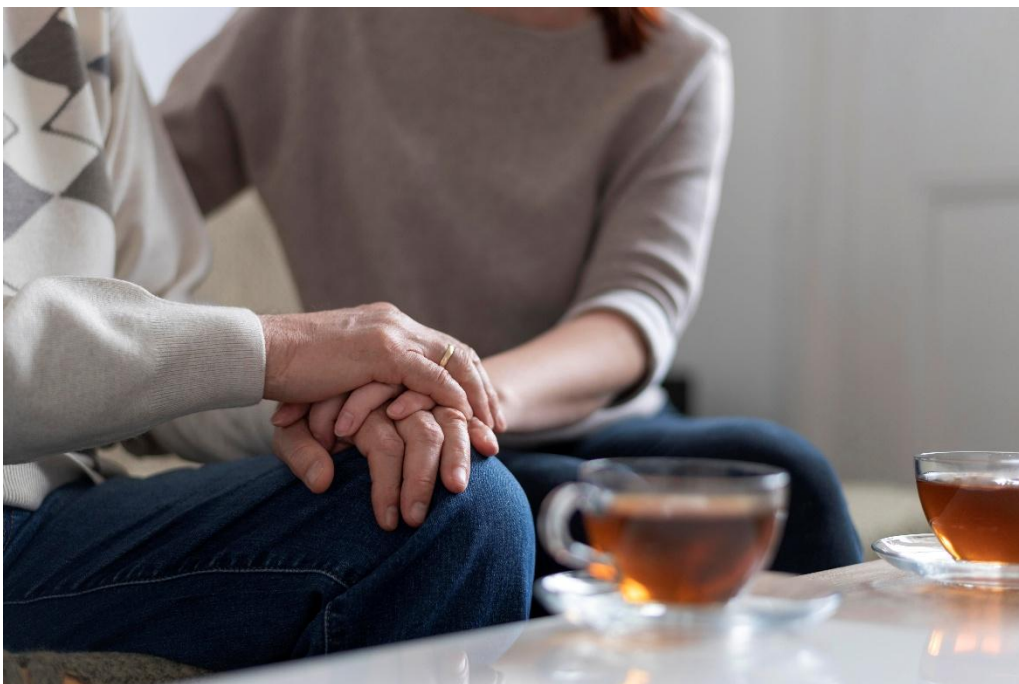
- Pass them to your home hospice nurse, or
- Hand them to any hospital pharmacy for disposal

Caring For Yourself

You matter too

The journey from diagnosis till the last hours is exhausting, do remember to:

- Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated
- Eat well and healthily
- Ensure you have enough sleep
- Ask for help from other family members or friends when you need to
- Allow yourself short breaks and get some fresh air outside
- Always be kind to yourself



While many keep vigil to catch a loved one's last breath, the person dying may choose to quietly slip away during that little moment when we doze off, use the bathroom or step away from the bed. We may not be able to explain why, but do not blame yourself, and take comfort in the precious memories of time spent with your loved one in this final journey.

*Contents from: Singapore Hospice Council – Understanding the Final Hours
Singapore Hospice Council – Caring for Yourself After a Death*

When grief is a concern

While we encourage everyone to take their time to grieve and emphasise that each grief journey is unique, there are some individuals who may need further support in their journey. If you or anyone in the family develop any of the following, professional help should be sought.

- Difficulty functioning in daily life
- Unable to focus on other things
- Excessive feelings of sorrow, anger, resentment or guilt
- Neglecting personal care, hygiene & grooming
- Turning to alcohol, drugs or other vices
- Hearing voices or seeing things that are not actually there
- Persistent thoughts & feelings of being worthless & hopeless
- Unable to find joy, positive feelings or meaning in life
- No longer taking part in social activities
- Having thoughts of suicide or self-harm

The following agencies provide support that you may need:

Samaritans of Singapore (SOS) For those having suicidal thoughts www.sos.org.sg Email Befriending: pat@sos.org.sg	1767 (24-hour)	Children's Cancer Foundation For children & families bereaved by cancer www.ccf.org.sg	6229 3701
SAGE Counselling Centre For bereaved seniors above 50 www.sagecc.org.sg	1800-555 5555	Hua Mei Counselling and Coaching For grieving elderly above 50 www.tsaofoundation.org	6593 9549
O'Joy Care Services For those above 18 www.ojoy.org	6749 0190	Grief Matters Email: griefmatters@montfortcare.org.sg	8181 0448
Viriya Community Services www.viriya.org.sg Email: griefsupport@viriy.org.sg	6285 8033	Counselling and Care Centre For bereavement counselling www.counsel.org.sg	6536 6366
Wicare Support Group For widows & their children www.wicare.org.sg	6354 2475	Life Point (by Society of Sheng Hong Welfare Services) For those who lost an elderly family member www.shenghong.org.sg/life-point/	6538 9877

List of Useful Contacts

This is only a suggested list of service providers, and it does not constitute endorsement by the hospice.

Private Nursing Agencies

Accreditation (of registered nurse) is required for administration of injections

Equipment Rental or Purchase

For oxygen concentrators

Active Global Specialised Caregivers www.activeglobalcaregiver.sg	6536 0086	Rehab Mart	6250 0555 6324 7077 6455 1551
Jaga-Me www.jaga-me.com	6717 3737	DNR Wheels	6254 4070
Homage www.homage.sg	6100 0055	Lifeline Corporation Pte Ltd	6289 2062 8200 2920
RasaCare www.rasacare.sg	6100 3600	Heng-Gref Medical Supplies	6272 6018
SpeedDoc https://sg.speedoc.com/	6909 7799	EC Healthcare Includes oxygen concentrators up to 10L/min	9387 8209
VickyCares https://vickycares.sg/	6513 6300 8668 8360 (WhatsApp)	Rainbow Care Includes oxygen concentrators up to 10L/min	6223 0904 6749 1456

Home Medical Services

If medical assistance is needed for discharge after office hours & before home hospice support becomes available

Helplines

Counselling services available

Active Global Specialised Caregivers www.activeglobalcaregiver.sg	6536 0086	Samaritans of Singapore (SOS)	1767 (24-hour)
Jaga-Me www.jaga-me.com	6717 3737	Care Corner Counselling Centre	1800-353 5800
Homage www.homage.sg	6100 0055	TOUCHline	1800-377 2252
RasaCare www.rasacare.sg	6100 3600	WINGS Counselling Centre	6383 5745
Homereach Healthcare	8448 6788	EMCC	6788 8220
SpeedDoc https://sg.speedoc.com/	6909 7799	Shan You Counselling Centre	6741 9293
VickyCares https://vickycares.sg/	6513 6300 8668 8360 (WhatsApp)	Grief Matters	8181 0448
D&C Medical Services https://dcmed.org	9837 0158		

Death Certification

Ranges from \$250 - \$450

Trinity Medical Group (24-hour)	8223 4999
Homereach Healthcare (24-hour)	8448 6788
mobiledoctorclinic (24-hour)	6250 0625
RasaCare (24-hour)	6100 3600
Ninkatec	6247 9247
D&C Medical Services	9837 0158
Your own GP	

Funeral Directors*#

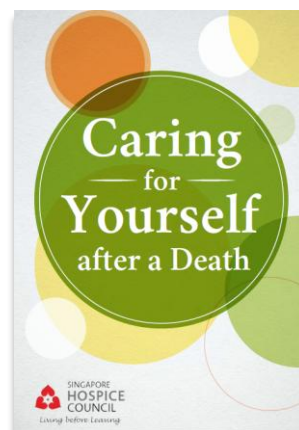
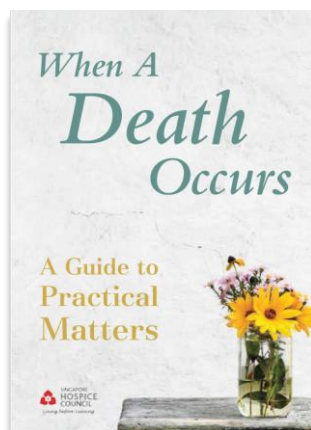
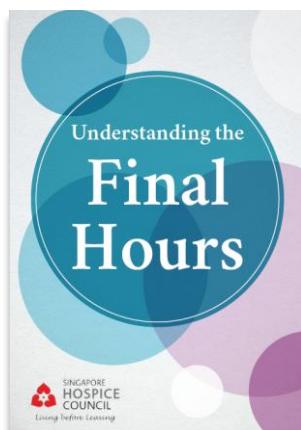
List from: <https://afd.org.sg/finding-a-funeral-director/>

Amazing Grace Bereavement Care	1800-777 2422 / 8321 2244 (WhatsApp)
Ang Chin Moh Funeral Directors	1800-226 3333
Ang Yew Seng Funeral Parlour	9090 1999
Chye Seng Undertaker	6251 2833 / 9638 5720
Direct Singapore Funeral Services & Embalming	6555 1115
Hindu Casket	6222 4444 / 9222 4444
Hosanna Bereavement Services	6352 7797 / 9760 2279
The Life Celebrant	6684 8488 / 9113 3386
Trinity Casket	6451 4496 / 6451 4497
Serbaguna Muslim Funeral Services & Contractor	6440 8471 / 9634 7145
Serenity Casket	6289 6689 / 9618 6689
Simplicity Casket Pte Ltd	6456 7423
Sin Eng Hin Undertaker	6251 1922 / 9815 6786
Singapore Casket Co.	6293 4388
Singapore Funeral Group	1800-800 1818
Singapore Funeral Services	1800-800 8888 6235 9679 / 9815 6786
Singapore Funeral Solutions	8822 5528
Singapore Muslim Casket and Marble Contractor	6440 7259
Union Casket	6353 8449 / 9118 8449

* With certification for COVID-19/ HIV funeral services

For patients with leadless pacemaker

Other Educational Resources



Additional resources available for download from
Singapore Hospice Council website:

www.singaporehospice.org.sg

- Understanding the Final Hour
- When A Death Occurs - A Guide to Practical Matters
- Caring for Yourself After a Death



My Notes



It is okay to ask for help.

My Notes



Take care of yourself.

My Notes



You are not alone.