



Imminent Death Toolkit

CHECKLIST

- ☐ 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.

- ☐ Do you know how to communicate compassionately with the family and friends of a patient who is dying? Most people have never seen a person dying; providing a gentle explanation can encourage transparent communication.

- ☐ Be respectful at all times when caring for someone who has died. They remain your patient even 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.

HELPFUL LINKS

- CareSearch. 2026. [Changes at the time of Death](#)
 - National Cancer Institute. 2025. [Last Days of Life \(PDQ®\)-Health Professional Version](#)
 - palliAGED. 2025. [Tips for Nurses: Signs of Imminent Death](#)
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VIDEOS, BLOGS, and PODCASTS

- End-of-Life Essentials. 2026. [Responding to the Hard Questions](#)
 - Nicholas, A. 2024. End-of-Life Essentials Blog. [Recognising When End of Life is Near: 4 Key Signs](#)
 - NSW Government Agency for Clinical Innovation. 2022. Palliative care video library. [Viewing the body](#)
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FURTHER READING

- Witkamp E, Droger M, Janssens R, van Zuylen L, van der Heide A. How to Deal With Relatives of Patients Dying in the Hospital? Qualitative Content Analysis of Relatives' Experiences. J Pain Symptom Manage. 2016 Aug;52(2):235-242. [doi: 10.1016/j.jpainsymman.2016.02.009.](#)
 - Cardona M, Stehlik P, Fawzy P, Byambasuren O, Anderson J, Clark J, Sun S, Scott I. Effectiveness and sustainability of deprescribing for hospitalized older patients near end of life: a systematic review. Expert Opin Drug Saf. 2021 Jan;20(1):81-91.e3. [doi: 10.1080/14740338.2021.1853704.](#)
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