

Learning About Caring for Someone During Their Dying Process



What is the dying process?

The dying process is the final stage of living. While death is a single event, the dying process is the collection of changes that happen in the mind and body as death nears. These changes may happen over weeks, days, or hours. How long the process takes can vary.

What can you expect?

The dying process can vary from person to person, but here are some things you can expect.

- **Emotional and spiritual changes.** Some people are social during their final days. Others prefer quiet time. Some people find comfort in their spiritual beliefs. Others may start to question their beliefs.
- **Appetite changes.** The person may eat or drink less, or not at all.
- **Breathing changes,** like periods of fast breathing and then periods of no breathing. Noisy breathing is also common.
- **Temperature changes,** like having a high temperature or feeling very cold.
- **Increased sleepiness and weakness.** The person may need more help to walk, bathe, and use the toilet. They may sleep more and be harder to wake up.
- **Urinary and bowel changes,** like dark or red urine and hard stools that are difficult to pass or loss of bladder and bowel control.
- **Delirium.** This can include agitation, hallucinations, and varied levels of alertness.

How can you care for yourself?

When you're caring for someone who is nearing the end of life, it can be easy to think less about your own needs. But to be a good caregiver, you have to take care of yourself first.

Try to eat well, get exercise, and do what you can to get enough rest. Take breaks, and take time to do things for yourself. Don't be afraid to ask for or accept help from others.

Consider joining a caregiver support group. Talking to people who are having a similar experience can really help. And support groups can connect you to resources for help in your community.

Finally, be gentle with yourself. It's common to have a range of emotions during this time. If you want to talk, seek out close family members, friends, or spiritual advisors. Hospice can provide emotional support too. Counseling can also help you process your feelings and cope with grief.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/patiented>

Enter **C005** in the search box to learn more about **"Learning About Caring for Someone During Their Dying Process"**.

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