

End-of-Life Physical Care Guide

Quick Reference Sheet for Carers

Comfort & Pain Management

- Assess pain regularly (facial expressions, breathing, agitation)
- Follow prescribed pain relief
- Comfort measures: repositioning, soft blankets, calm lighting, gentle touch

Skin Care & Pressure Relief

- Reposition every 2 hours or as tolerated
- Use pressure-relieving mattress/cushions
- Keep skin clean and dry, use barrier creams

Breathing Support

- Elevate head of bed for easier breathing
- Use small fan for airflow if helpful
- Medications for breathlessness/secretions if prescribed

Mouth & Oral Care

- Frequent mouth swabs and moistening
- Lip balm to prevent cracking
- Small sips/ice chips if safe — do not force fluids

Nutrition & Hydration

- Natural decline in appetite is normal
- Offer soft foods if patient still wants to eat
- Never force food or fluid

Mobility & Positioning

- Move slowly and gently
- Support joints
- Comfort and dignity first

Elimination & Hygiene

- Keep clean and dry
- Use pads/catheters as needed
- Provide gentle perineal care

Environment & Dignity

- Maintain privacy

- Calm room, soft light
- Explain actions even if they cannot respond

Information for Families

Caring for someone at end-of-life focuses on comfort, dignity, and peace.

What to Expect:

- Appetite and thirst naturally decrease
- Breathing patterns may change
- More sleeping, less communication
- Skin may feel cool or mottled
- Restlessness or confusion can happen

How You Can Help:

- Hold hands or offer gentle touch (if comforting)
- Speak softly and calmly
- Play soft music or bring familiar items
- Offer sips of water if still able — never force food
- Ask staff if unsure how to help

Important Reassurance:

- Reduced eating/drinking is a natural part of dying
- Our priority is comfort, dignity, and peace
- You are not alone — staff are here to support you too