

Did You Know...?

Dying is a Process

It occurs over a 3-6 month timeframe

- All patients behave the same—no matter the illness
- Go from eating to tasting to just looking at food
- Sleep-wake cycle reverses
- Decrease in functional ability
- Need more assistance with ADLs and IADLs

Terminal Stage Signs (last 2-3 months)

- Beyond cure or rehab
- Progressive illness with limited life expectancy
- Anorexia/Cachexia Syndrome
- Progressive weakness
- Increasing debility/dependence
- Declining general condition
- Psychosocial/spiritual needs
- Time of family crisis

Pre-active Stage Signs (last 2-3 weeks)

- Little oral intake (<1 liter/24 hours)
- Incontinence (urine output <400cc/24 hrs)
- Increasing breathlessness, rising HR
- Reversal of sleep-wake cycle
- Delirium/restlessness/fluctuating LOC
- Spiritual events, i.e., “visits” from those already deceased/angels

Imminent Death Syndrome (days-hours)

Signs include:

- Decreased responsiveness/consciousness
- Decreased intake food/water
- Decreased urine output
- Skin color and temperature decrease, cooling
- Livedo reticularis/mottling
- Decreased HR and BP (fluctuations)
- Swallowing dysfunction/death rattle
- Breathing changes/apnea
- Restlessness
- Gaze as if through you or through clouds

Agonal Stage Signs (last 2-3 hours)

- Stupor/Coma
- Tachypnea (Cheyne-Stokes) agonal pattern
- Imperceptible radial pulses (last 4-6 hours)
- Tachycardia-Bradycardia-Asystole
- Pupils dilated, fixed (last 15-30 minutes)

Death Event (last 2-3 moments)

- Spiritual experiences (moment of death)
- Bolt upright as if seeing; smiling
- Epiphora (final tear)
- Bright reflection
- Sense of calm (end of suffering/reunion)

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