

Where can I get further help?

Make an appointment to see your GP if you'd like to talk about any concerns or worries you have. You can also take a look at the Trust's website to see what services we offer and contact details. If you cannot get online please contact our customer services team on 0800 587 2108 for more details

Website – www.southwestyorkshire.nhs.uk

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Booklets available in this series:

- Anger – How do I manage it?
- Baby Blues – How can I best deal with them?
- Bereavement – How can I cope?
- Confidence – How can I get some?
- Healthy living – What should I do?
- Healthy sex – How can I be sure?
- Low moods – How can I feel better?
- My body, my health. Check it out!
- Pain – What can I do to help myself?
- Self harm – How can I help myself?
- Shyness – How can I manage it?
- Sleep – How can I get some?
- Stress – How do I manage it?
- Worries – How can I best deal with them?

Your feedback is welcome

We invite you to share any comments, compliments, concerns or complaints you have about the Trust. Please speak to a member of staff or contact our customer services team on 0800 587 2108, who can also provide help in understanding this information, including in other formats.



The end of life

How can I prepare for it?

Talking about what happens when you are nearing the end of your life can be difficult for many people, but knowing what to expect can help you to make plans and decisions that you are happy with.

This booklet talks about the final stages of your life, what to expect from them and how to make that time as comfortable as possible. This will help you prepare and come to decisions that you're happy with.

Plan

When you are ready, make a plan of the practical things you need to do. Get together with a loved one or someone you can trust and have a pen and paper to hand. You might find the questions in this booklet useful to think about.

Legal

Have you made a will?

A will is a legally binding document that explains what you would like to happen to important things in your life. This would usually cover your estate (home, land, possessions and money) and outlines who you would like it to be left to. It may also include who you want to deal with everything and who you would like to be your children's legal guardian, if appropriate.

There are different types of wills and it's important to make sure you choose the right one in order for all your wishes to be carried out.

Do you want to create a Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA)?

An LPA is a legal document that allows you to select a person or people to make decisions on your behalf concerning:

Your health and welfare

If the time comes when you are unable to make decisions about your health and welfare, your attorney will be able to make them for you. This could be about your daily routine, your diet, what you wear or even to refuse life sustaining treatment. It's important to set out what decisions you want this person to make whilst you are able as the attorney can have an effect on other plans you may have written down (in your advance statement for example – see next section.)

Your property and financial affairs

If there comes a time when you cannot manage your financial affairs anymore, you can ask someone to do this for you. They can then do things such as pay your bills, collect income or sell your house. You can set restrictions as to what that person can do even if you still have the mental capacity to do these things yourself.

If you are unsure about anything legal, seek advice before making any decisions.

If you would like more information on these topics please visit www.gov.uk or call 03004560300.

Your healthcare

Think about the things that matter to you and are important to you when planning your care and make sure you write this down. This is known as an advance statement of preference and wishes. You will then need to share it with those who need to know. Ask your healthcare professional to go through this with you and think about the following:

Do you want to write an Advance Decision to Refuse Treatment (ADRT)?

This lets your family, carers and health professionals know whether you want to refuse specific treatments in the future. This means they will know your wishes if you're unable to make or communicate those decisions yourself.

The treatments you're deciding to refuse must all be named in the advance decision.

You can refuse a treatment that could potentially keep you alive (known as life-sustaining treatment). This includes treatments such as ventilation and cardio pulmonary resuscitation (CPR), which may be used if you cannot breathe by yourself or if your heart stops.

An ADRT is legally binding when signed, witnessed and dated. You may want to refuse a treatment in some situations, but not others. If this is the case, you need to be clear about all the circumstances in which you want to refuse treatment. It's strongly advised that you discuss this with a doctor who knows about your medical history before you make up your mind. You need to understand the consequences of making this decision, such as your life might be at risk.

Who do you want the doctors and nurses to speak to: yourself or someone else who is close to you?

Other important things to consider

- Organ donation, cremation, burial or funeral arrangements.
- Children, pets or anything that will need to be looked after.
- Are there any particular religious or spiritual practices that you would like to be carried out near to the time of your death?

If there's anything you are unsure about or need more information on don't be afraid to ask for help either from someone close to you or a healthcare professional. Don't be pressured into making any decisions that you are not fully informed on.

Arrange

You need to be comfortable in your surroundings and with the people around you in the last months, weeks or days of your life. Think about:

Where do you want to be cared for?

This could be a hospital, a nursing home, your home or a friend/family member's home. Think practically as well to make sure you have easy access to the right equipment and healthcare professionals.

What, and who, do you want around in the final stages of your life?

Think about physical surroundings such as photos, lighting, views or keepsakes.

Do you have any unresolved issues that you would like to sort out with anyone in particular?

Are your everyday items in a place where you can easily access them?

If you're alone much of the time you may want to have your phone nearby. Think about snacks, drinks, extra blankets, pillows etc.

Talk to somebody about your wishes so they know what you want and can start to make arrangements.

Changes

This is all about what to expect and how you can help yourself. In here is the kind of information you might be scared to read about, but we encourage you to read on as sometimes it's the not knowing that actually makes you more fearful. Being prepared for what may come can make the situation a little easier to deal with.

It's important to note that not everyone will experience all of these symptoms as every person is different.

Emotional and mind changes

It's natural to have anxieties and worries when you know you're reaching the end of your life. Why not talk about your worries with somebody? It can often help just to talk and if you feel you can't open up to anyone close to you, you can always speak with a counsellor, a healthcare professional or even a religious or spiritual advisor.

You might feel as though you don't want to do anything, get involved with anything or even be close to your family or loved ones. As upsetting as this may be to you and your loved ones it is a natural reaction and quite common.

Keep in mind that stress and sometimes medication can lead to memory problems or confusion. Try to leave any important decisions for times when you feel at your best. Never feel pressured into making decisions when you are not comfortable to do so.

Physical changes

Change in appearance.

You might get upset if you look in a mirror and find you don't look like you used to but remember your body is going through a lot of change. This may be difficult but talking to someone may help. They may also be able to help you find ways to make you feel better about yourself and give you a confidence boost. It's important to spend time on yourself.

Less energy and mobility

You may feel tired and have a lack of energy. It's important to pace yourself so you can make time for the things that you really want to do.

Your body may become weaker as you get ill so make sure you rest. Try to make yourself as comfortable as possible. If you spend a lot of time on a chair or in a bed you might find that you get sore areas, maybe on your heels or bottom. Try to change position as often as you can and talk to your healthcare professional about what is available to help if you feel uncomfortable.

You might get some fluid build up in your ankles or legs. Try elevating your legs and talking to your nurse or physiotherapist. They will be able to show you some movements to do that will ease the build up.

Weight loss

In time you may find that you lose weight or don't have as much of an appetite. This is completely normal but if you want to boost your appetite try eating small frequent meals that consist of your favourite foods; and make them look good! If it's ok by your doctor (make sure you check first) why not have a glass of your favourite alcoholic drink 30 minutes before you eat? Some find that this kick starts their appetites!

What else might change?

Your sleep may become disturbed. This could be down to your mind working overtime, pain, medication or things around you that cause you to not be able to sleep properly. Try talking to someone close to you or your healthcare professional about what you think about when you are trying to fall asleep. Together, try to come up with a plan to help you sleep better.

You may also feel nauseous. This is very common so please try not to worry. There are some ways you can try and reduce nausea by:

- Eating food that doesn't smell strong - try cold or warm food as it doesn't smell as much as hot food.
- Eating dry food such as crackers.
- Sipping a fizzy drink
- Eating little and often.
- Trying ginger. What about ginger biscuits, or adding ginger to your tea?

You may get constipated if you're not moving around or eating and drinking as much as you used to. Try drinking more fluids or add high fibre foods to your diet such as fruit, vegetables, brown rice, bread or pasta. You may also find that you have problems controlling your bladder or emptying it. Please talk to your nurse or doctor if this is a problem.

You may experience breathlessness. There are many positions and techniques that you can learn that will allow you to breathe more effectively. Please ask your nurse or doctor to show you these. If the breathlessness is caused by a build up of fluid on the lungs it may be possible to drain the fluid off in hospital. Your doctor will be able to advise you on this or speak to the hospital.

If it is caused by anaemia a blood transfusion may help this. Your thoughts and feelings should be considered when thinking about further treatments and tests at this stage in your life and illness. It is a good idea to talk to a healthcare professional or doctor so the right decision is made.

If you have a cough or wheeze try sitting as upright as possible with a supporting pillow to open up your airways and help you to breathe more easily.

What else is available?

Complementary therapies can be used alone or in conjunction with medicines. They aren't prescriptive or invasive and work with the interaction of the mind, body and energy systems. Examples of the types of therapy available are:

- Acupuncture
- Aromatherapy
- Hypnotherapy
- Visualisation
- Reiki
- Relaxation techniques

Many hospitals and hospices offer these services to carers as well as it can be a nice kind of therapy to go through with a loved one. However please talk to your doctor to make sure it will not affect your medication or treatment and be aware that many of these treatments will cost.

Your time matters

After reading through this booklet we hope you feel you can talk openly with those closest to you about your wishes. Through talking and understanding, death can seem a less stressful and lonely time for both you and your loved ones.

We want you to find this book helpful. However it's not intended to be a direct substitute for a consultation with a healthcare professional.

