



What will happen?

When someone dies, their body stops working. They stop breathing and their heart stops beating. They may look a bit paler and after a little while their skin may feel cold. It's okay to touch or kiss the person if you would like to. You won't hurt them because when a person dies they don't feel anymore.

After someone we love has died, we may feel lots of different things like sadness, anger or relief. Again there's no right or wrong way to feel, but it helps to talk about your feelings with grown ups that you trust and let them know about what is worrying you. This may be a really difficult and painful time but there will be people around to help you.

Things won't always be so difficult. You will never forget them, but in time it won't hurt as much as it does today.

Remember all the times that you've shared together and your special memories will last forever.

This has been adapted from a guide developed by the Marie Curie Palliative Care Institute and the Childhood Bereavement Network, United Kingdom.

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This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

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Saying goodbye to someone special

Suggested ages 5 to 11 years



You may have already been told that your relative or friend is very ill. The doctors and nurses will do all they can to make sure that they're comfortable and not in any pain, but sadly we can't make them well and we can't make them better.

Sometimes when a person is very ill their body doesn't work properly. We can see that this is happening because people may become a lot sleepier, their breathing can change and they no longer want or need to eat and drink.

This means that the person is dying and the doctors and nurses think that this is now happening to your friend or relative.

What changes will I see?

As a person's body stops working, their breathing may sound noisier. Sometimes people can seem a little bit restless but everyone is different.

You may want to spend time with them. You can talk to them and hold their hand if you want to. They can still hear you and will know that you're there but they probably won't be able to talk to you. Sometimes people decide that they don't want to spend time with their friend or relative at this time and that's okay too.

It's important that you do what you feel is right for you. If you choose not to visit you may want to send a message, card or letter with a relative or friend who may be visiting.

How will I feel?

When someone is dying we can feel lots of different things. We may feel very sad or angry that this is happening to us or just muddled up. Remember, there's no right or wrong way to feel.

If there's anything that you don't understand or that you're worried about, ask a grown up who can help you. You may notice that the grown ups in your family are feeling very sad as well, but they still want to help and look after you.

How long will it take?

Sometimes a person can be very sleepy for a number of days before they die. Other people may die more quickly. The important thing for you to remember is that the doctors and nurses will watch them very carefully and give them more medicine or change their medicine to make sure that they're comfortable.

During this time you should still try to eat and drink and talk to your friends, as you would normally do. It's very hard to be sad all the time and it may help you to do other things as well.

