

# How do you know the end is near?



## Signs that a palliative patient is deteriorating

**Deterioration** refers to signs of a person's decline or reduced state of health.

### MONITORING DETERIORATION MEANS WE CAN

- Plan palliative care pathway
- Manage symptoms early
- Consider ceasing active treatment
- Plan for the future
- Support emotional needs
- Avoid inappropriate hospital transfers
- Ensure patients wishes are met

### WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF DETERIORATION?

General indicators of poor or deteriorating health can start weeks or months before a person dies, and include:

- Global deterioration (physical and psychological)
- Stubborn or irreversible symptoms that don't respond to treatments (such as severe appetite and weight loss, fluid retention, drowsiness, recurring infection, nausea and an overall drop in physical function)
- Withdrawal from their environment
- A drop in energy levels



For further information  
[www.hammondcare.com.au/  
care/palliative-supportive-care](http://www.hammondcare.com.au/care/palliative-supportive-care)

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## How do you know the **end is near?**

### **DETERIORATION MIGHT BE OCCURRING IF THEY ARE**

- Bedbound
- Spending more time sleeping/resting
- Eating less
- Having difficulty swallowing
- Experiencing changes in their level of consciousness
- Displaying terminal agitation

### **Helpful tools**

- Supportive and Palliative Care Indicators Tool (SPIC-4ALL)
- Australia-modified Karnovsky Scale (AMKS)



**Remember - the earlier  
you notice deterioration,  
the better the chance of  
relieving suffering...**

### **Suggested resources**

**The Palliative Care Handbook**

**The Palliative Care - End of Life FlipChart**

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