

Let's talk about...

When a Parent Begins Hospice Care

When a parent starts hospice care, it is a big change for the whole family. Though difficult, including children in what is happening is important. Here is a guide on how to talk to kids and help them through this time.

Getting Ready

Provide honest information that kids can understand. Every child is different; some want to know everything, while others only want a little bit of information.

Talking about Hospice:

Explain that the doctors have done everything they can to cure the illness, and now the goal is comfort. You can say: "Hospice is for people who are not expected to live much longer. The team makes sure they aren't in pain while their body slowly stops working."

What to Expect

As a person gets closer to dying, their body changes. Telling kids what to expect can make it less scary:

- **Sleepiness:** Dying takes a lot of energy. The parent might sleep most of the time, but they can often still hear you.
- **Eating:** The body does not need food or water anymore. This is just how the body shuts down.
- **Breathing:** Their breath might get faster, slower, or sound like loud snoring.
- **Appearance:** Their skin might feel cold or look a bit blue or purple. This is normal.

For more information or to connect with a Child Life Specialist, please visit: <http://ucdavis.health/childlife>



Ways to Help

Kids can still connect with their parent. They might want to:

- Hold their hand or tell them a story.
- Play quiet music or decorate the room.
- Read a book nearby or draw a picture.

Supporting the Kids

- **Check-in often:** Have regular family meetings to talk about how everyone is feeling and what might happen next.
- **Answer questions:** If a child asks a question, they are usually ready for the answer. If the answer is not known, it is okay to say, "The answer is not clear, but we will try to find out."
- **Keep routines:** It is healthy for kids to still go to school, play with friends, and have fun. It helps them cope.

Making a Plan

Talk to the children about what they want to happen when the parent dies. Ask if they want to be there or if they want to be told while not at home. Having a plan makes a very difficult situation a little easier to handle.

Remember, grieving is natural. By being honest and staying connected, you help kids learn that they can get through hard times with support.