

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR THE PUBLIC ABOUT EXPECTED/PLANNED HOME DEATHS

1. What is the Joint Protocol For Planned/Expected Home Deaths? Why is it needed?

The Joint Protocol explains how to plan for a patient with life-limiting illness to remain at home until death. It is called *joint* because a number of groups -- the BC Medical Association, the College of Registered Nurses of BC, BC Ambulance Services, the Funeral Service Association of BC, and others -- worked with the Ministry of Health to develop these instructions. All of these groups need to be involved to manage an expected home death and ensure necessary supports and processes are in place for individuals who plan to die at home.

2. I or my loved one would like to die at home. Are there any guides that could help my family with these difficult discussions?

Many people are uncomfortable talking about death and dying. There are numerous resources that may assist you and help you to prepare for conversations about death and dying. Check your public library, the library of your local hospice organization, or your local bookstore for books on this subject. You may also want to speak to staff and volunteers of your local hospice organization, your physician, community nurse, or your spiritual advisor.

3. Who can help with planning a home death?

Your community nurse and your family physician are often the best people to assist you with planning for a home death; local hospice groups and palliative care programs may also be helpful to you.

4. What is meant by No Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation? Why do we need a form for this?

Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) is an emergency procedure used to restore blood flow to a person suffering from cardiac arrest. Cardiac arrest is when the heart stops functioning or beating. Signs of cardiac arrest include no breathing and no pulse. Conventional CPR includes artificial respiration and chest compressions to restore blood flow and oxygen to vital organs.

A No CPR order is a doctor's instruction that no one should try to revive you if you stop breathing or your heart stops. [HealthLink BC](#) offers a decision point to help you decide if you want to receive CPR called "[End-of-Life Care: Should I Receive CPR and Life Support?](#)". If you have decided that you would not want CPR, you should tell your doctor or nurse.

If you have a No CPR order completed by your physician, you can get a MedicAlert® bracelet or necklet with a No CPR Order engraved on it. To obtain a free bracelet/necklet, please call 1 800 668-1507 or visit

the website at www.medicalert.ca/nocpr. You can review more BC specific information on No CPR form [here](#).

5. What should we do if we have signed the No Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation form and call 911 at the time of death, just because we panic?

You can call the 911 dispatch and ask them to cancel the call. However, it may be too late to contact the ambulance and fire departments who will be dispatched. If they arrive, show them the No Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation Order and explain your situation. Ask them to help you contact a family member or friend to be with you to help you make the necessary arrangements.

6. What is the *Notification of Expected Death in the Home Form*?

This is a form to be completed by a physician following discussion with the patient and/or family. It allows the physician to notify a funeral home that someone's death is anticipated and, that after death has occurred, the funeral home may remove your loved one's body with the consent of the person authorized to make decisions (this may be a family member, friend etc.). If this notification form is completed, you and the funeral home do not need to wait for a physician or nurse to come to the home to pronounce the death. It is also important to consult the funeral home as to whether they can arrange for removal of the body on a 24 hr basis and how they can be contacted outside of regular hours.

7. What is pronouncement of death? How will I know my loved one has really died?

Pronouncement of death is the act of observing that someone has died. It is not legally required that a physician or a nurse make this declaration; a family member can do so by watching the person's breathing and noting when the breathing has stopped. Usually the breathing pattern gradually changes until the person is breathing very slowly and then not at all. You need to wait one hour after the breathing has stopped before calling the funeral home to remove the body.

8. What if I sign the *Notification of Expected Death in the Home form* and then change my mind?

You may change your mind at any time before or after the death has occurred. If you do, you should contact a physician or a nurse to request a home visit to pronounce the death. There may be a wait especially if this happens during the night.

9. If a home support worker is alone at home at the time of death and a *Notification of Expected Death in the Home form* has been completed, can the home support worker call the funeral home to remove the body?

No. In such a circumstance, the home support worker should remain with the body until the family or

designate arrives; only the family or designate has the authority to call the funeral home to request removal of the body.

10. What is a *Medical Certificate of Death*? What is a death certificate?

The *Medical Certificate of Death* is a form completed by your physician (the same one who completes the *Notification of Expected Death in the Home*) that indicates that the person has died and the cause of death. The funeral home must have this *Medical Certificate of Death* prior to burial or cremation. The medical certificate of death and other information about the person who has died is provided to the BC Vital Statistics Agency (www.vs.gov.bc.ca) which will then issue a death certificate. The death certificate is the official registration of the death and contains the individual's full name, gender, date of death, place of death, place of birth, resident province, state or country, registration number, and date of registration; it does not have the cause of death. The death certificate will be necessary in settling the legal and business affairs of the deceased.