

Preparing for Death at Home (April 2020)

(this was an answer to a question someone had specifically related to their Elderly loved one who was living alone at home and receiving 24/7 care from family and Community Care providers).

First, the family needs to be mentally and emotionally prepared that no one will call 911 and that your loved one's symptoms will be treated for comfort.

Second, you need to get everything in place now even if nothing is imminent. You should contact your Physician and your Home Care Coordinator who can help with the following.

1. Let them know what the plan is and that your loved one would like to die at home and that from now on they do not wish to extend their life but to remain as comfortable as possible.
2. The Physician needs to provide the following:
 - a) An order for and the actual medications for end of life, called the Symptom Response Kit
 - b) An EDITH -[Expected Death In the Home](#) - Chart must be filled out
 - c) An order to allow the (your) nurse to pronounce death.

Once this is set up if your loved one becomes ill with pneumonia for example, s/he will be treated for her symptoms. For example: Tylenol for fever, cold cloth to forehead, loose light sheets, possibly a fan and other comfort medications (that are in the Symptom Response Kit usually) as things progress. Ice water or water and ongoing loving support.

If your loved one dies at home, and you have this plan in place, there is no need to call 911. You call your nurse who can pronounce death and you can call your friends and family - whoever you want to have come visit. You call the funeral home* when you are ready to do so. The funeral homes often like to move things along faster than is necessary or legally required. You are allowed to have your loved one at home for as long as is "dignified". I can describe what that means another time, but basically you do not need to feel pressured; it is fine to have your loved one at home for a day or two (even three) so everyone can come and say their goodbyes. Just let the funeral home know that is your plan and you will let them know when you are ready. Remember, you set the agenda, not them.

Home and community care can help you coordinate with your physician to get the plan in place, should you need it. If your Care Coordinator does not seem able, then I suggest you ask to speak to Sarah Kearney-Nolet and explain your situation. She is a Care Coordinator very experienced with end of life and palliative care patients and she can guide your Care Coordinator if that is needed.

*You also may choose not to involve a funeral home at all. If you are considering a DIY home death and funeral, and have questions, send me an email and I can put you in touch with the right folks