

Bereavement Information for families/whānau

He kōrero pouritanga mō ngā whānau

Introduction

He Kupu Whakataki

We extend our deepest sympathy to you and your family at this time following the loss of your family/whānau member.

Grief is how we respond to a significant loss. When someone you are close to dies it can be hard to accept. The feelings can be powerful, conflicting and intense. You may experience a sense of shock and disbelief. Many people feel exhausted, finding it difficult to think clearly, sleep, eat or find they are easily tearful.

We hope the information in this brochure helps you to understand what might happen right now, what might need to be done in the near future, how to recognize what normal grief is and who to contact for further information and support.

My family/whānau member has just died. What happens now?

Katahi anō ka mate taku whanaunga. Ka aha ināianei?

The nurse who has been looking after your family/whānau member will be able to talk you through the process that happens next. You are welcome to stay and be with your family/whānau member for some time on the ward. The nurse can assist you to make contact with other family/whānau or friends that you wish to inform and can contact a support person for you from the chaplaincy, social work, Whānau Care or Pacific Health Service.

If family members are far away and will not be able to reach the ward for a few hours arrangements can be discussed with the nurses. It may be possible to spend time with your family/whānau member in the viewing room which is next to the Mortuary.

The nurse will contact the medical team who has been caring for your family/whānau member. They will need to complete some legal and certification processes so you can organize funeral arrangements. This does not mean that you have to wait for any paperwork.

Following this the nurse then washes and dresses your family/whānau member and removes any drips or drains so your family/whānau member is ready to leave the ward. When your family/whānau member has left the ward, the room or bed space will be blessed.

Frequently asked questions

He pātai auau

How long will our family/whānau member be on the ward ?

Typically 2-4 hours, but this time may vary dependent on the individual circumstances.

I have some questions about the medical or nursing care, who can I speak to?

The nurse can contact your family/whānau member's doctor who would be happy to talk with you. Sometimes you might have questions a few weeks or even months after the death. We are always willing to help explain or talk over the events. The Charge Nurse Manager is the best person to contact after you have left the hospital, you can contact them via the hospital switchboard: (04) 385 5999.

Can I help wash my family/whānau member?

Yes, you are welcome to assist the nurse with carrying out the final wash. The nursing staff should ask you if there are any cultural or spiritual preferences you would like considered. Usually the nurse will dress your family/whānau member in a clean gown (or clothing requested) and they will be laid flat, dentures put in if they have been removed and then covered with a sheet and bedspread.

What do I do with the belongings and jewellery?

If possible, it is best that any jewellery, taonga or personal items are not left with your family/whānau member. We also suggest any property brought into the hospital is taken home as soon as possible so it is not lost. If jewellery, taonga or personal items are left with your family/whānau member, these will be recorded on our paperwork.

Can I take them straight home now?

In Wellington Hospital for legal reasons, your family/whānau member must leave the ward and be taken to the Mortuary department. You can collect your family/whānau member from there once this has been discussed with the Mortuary staff and if you have a suitable vehicle for transport (station wagon or van).

In Kenepuru hospital, funeral directors can collect the person directly from the ward once all the paper work has been completed.

When your family/whānau member is ready to leave the ward at Wellington Hospital the orderlies bring your family/whānau member to the Mortuary. They use a special trolley which looks like a metal casket on wheels and transport the person discreetly and with dignity. You are welcome to walk with the trolley to the Mortuary if you wish.

How do I go about organising the funeral arrangements?

Some people may have already organised a funeral director they would like to use, if not there are lists of funeral directors available in the yellow pages. All you need to do is call them and they will guide you through what needs to happen from there.

You do not have to use a funeral director, but there are certain legal requirements that need to be followed. The Department of Internal Affairs provides written information about this which is available from your nurse.

How much do funerals cost?

Funerals can vary in costs. Some people will have a funeral plan in place, others will not and the family will be responsible for costs. In certain circumstances you may be able to access help from Work and Income to assist with costs, in the form of a funeral grant. The Funeral Grant helps people with actual and reasonable funeral costs only and is not designed to cover the entire funeral expenses. A Funeral Grant is income and asset tested. The test depends on whether the deceased has a surviving partner or dependent child or if the deceased is a child.

What is a Medical certificate of causes of death (HP4720)?

This is an important piece of paper that is needed to register the death of your family/whānau member. The doctor will need to complete this form. This is not something you need to wait to collect, as the certificate will accompany your family/whānau member to the mortuary where the receiving person such as a funeral director will take the paperwork with them. They are responsible for forwarding this to Births, Death and Marriages, so that they can register the death.

What is a cremation certificate?

If your family/whānau member is to be cremated or if it is undecided, a cremation certificate (Cremation Certificate – certificate of Medical Practitioner (Form B)) must be completed by the Doctor, on the ward. This will be completed at the same time as the Medical certificate of causes of death; again there is no need to wait for this paperwork as it will be given to your Funeral Director by a member of the mortuary team.

What happens with bank accounts and benefits?

Bank accounts and benefits are frozen once the bank or Work and Income are aware the person has died. This is a legal requirement; a joint account may be different. The bank or a social worker may be able to help with further information.

What does referring to the coroner mean and what happens next?

A coroner might be called if the doctor has been unable to say why a person has died, or death has happened related to violent or unnatural events. All deaths that have happened during medical or surgical procedures are reported to the coroner.

If your family/whānau member is a coroner's case any drips or drains that are in their body will remain until after they have been examined. The examination is called a post-mortem or an autopsy. A post-mortem may delay release of the body for burial or cremation.

Further information can be found on www.justice.govt.nz/coroners

LOSS AND GRIEF

TE KŌINGO ME TE POURI

Loss and grief are a part of life – it's a very difficult part, but it's also an experience that most people will face at some point. When someone close to us dies, we can experience many different feelings, physical changes and behaviour that may be out of character or alarming to us. It is important to remember grief is a normal and expected process that helps us come to terms with the pain of losing someone we care about, and these feelings are usually helpful in the long run.

Everyone experiences grief in their own way – there isn't a "right" or a "wrong" way. However there are some common things that happen when we grieve. These experiences of loss and the emotions associated with them change over time, so it is helpful to understand these common feelings, experiences, and behaviour as this will help us to find ways of managing them.

The diagram in the middle of this booklet shows how our emotions may change over time following the loss of someone close to us.

WHEN WE ARE GRIEVING

I RARO I TE KAPUA POURI

Grief is the normal process of reacting to a loss. It can be felt emotionally, physically or in the way we react to normal situations. Many people report feeling an initial stage of numbness after first learning of a death, however there is no order to the way you will feel. You may not be prepared for the intensity or the duration of your emotions, or how quickly they may change. During the first few weeks after a loss, almost any type of reaction is possible or normal.

Some emotions you may experience include:

- Anger
- Confusion
- Denial
- Despair
- Disbelief
- Humiliation
- Sadness
- Guilt
- Shock
- Yearning

Some physical feelings you may experience include:

- Crying
- Dizziness
- Fast heartbeat or tightness in chest
- Tiredness
- Headaches
- Trouble concentrating
- Nausea
- Trouble sleeping
- Low energy or fatigue
- Coughs, colds and other illnesses
- Poor appetite
- Restlessness or irritability

Some behavioural changes you may experience include:

- Irritability
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty making decisions
- Neglecting household or family responsibilities
- Less organised or chaotic thinking
- Neglect of your personal hygiene
- Low motivation or energy
- Not wanting to go out

Your moods, actions and physical health may change quickly or unexpectedly, they may come and go and at times seem overwhelming. The experience may become more intense at different times, especially when it is triggered by events such as anniversaries, birthdays, favourite activities, or by unexpected reminders of your loss. It is normal to grieve over a long period of time. Grief can come and go but help is always available and it does become easier to manage over time.

COPING WITH LOSS

TE HOKI KI TE WHAIAO

During the weeks and months following the loss of someone you care about, there are many things you can do to look after yourself. It is important for our emotional, physical

and spiritual wellbeing to take the time to care for ourselves while we are grieving as these activities help us to adapt to life without the person that has died.

- Talk to someone you trust about how you are feeling
- Give yourself time and space to grieve
- Eat well and maintain a healthy diet
- When you are ready, start to socialise with friends again
- Keep up with any daily jobs so that you don't get overwhelmed by them
- Encourage others to talk about the person you have lost
- Take time out from your grief, go for a walk or listen to music
- Nurture yourself spiritually - prayer, mindfulness, meditation, engaging with your church or faith community - find what works for you.
- Distract yourself from the grief by doing things you enjoy
- Remember the good times alongside the sadness
- Talk about the person you have lost and what they meant to you
- Maintain physical activity
- Make sure you get regular rest and relaxation time
- Ask others for help, family and friends will often be more than happy to support you if you ask for it
- Find a creative outlet for your grief through music, art or other activities

It can be hard to feel motivated to look after yourself when you are grieving; however it is important to incorporate self-care into your everyday routine. Remember it is OK to let yourself have a break from intense feelings of grief. Be kind to yourself.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN WHO ARE GRIEVING

TE TAUTOKO I NGĀ TAMARIKI KEI RARO I TE KAPUA POURI

When someone close to them dies, children need support to adjust to the loss as well. Often children grieve very differently to the adults around them and this can cause confusion and distress if they are not appropriately supported. As adults it can be hard to put aside our own feelings to appropriately support children, however there are some things you can do to help a child with their grief:

- **Understanding** – The most effective way of supporting children is by helping them understand what has happened. Give them time to talk, think and play, as these are all ways for them to process grief.
- **Use language they understand** - Phrases like “passed away” or “not with us” can be confusing. It is easier for children to understand words like dead, died or death.
- **Children’s understanding of death and dying changes as they grow.** Younger children may not understand what it

means to die, while older children may blame themselves for what has happened. Be aware of their developmental stage and how they may react to the loss of someone close to them.

- **Talk to them as soon as you can** – Children know when something is wrong, so the sooner you give them information the better. It is preferable that the parent, guardian or someone close to the child tells them what has happened so that they can feel safe and secure.
- **Prepare what you want to say** – It can be difficult to talk about sad events in our lives, so it is best to think about what you want to say before you say it. Practice saying the words that you find hard to say. Remember it is ok to cry in front of children, it shows them it is sad for everyone.
- **Let them ask questions** – Children will have specific questions. Try not to give them too much information but let them ask the things they want to know instead. This way you will be confident in what you are saying, and the child will get the answers they need.
- **Expect mood changes** – Children grieve differently to adults. They may be sad one minute, and playing the next. This does not mean they don't understand or don't care. It is more likely just the way they are processing what has happened.
- **Check in with your child** – Children's grief tends to show at significant points in their lives. Birthdays, End of Year Assembly, and other events where the person who has died may have been present can often bring up feelings of grief. Ask your child how they are feeling and if they would like to talk about what has happened.
- Ask your child's teacher to keep you informed about any behaviour changes they may notice as this could be a sign that your child needs further help.

Services such as Skylight and other counselling agencies can provide valuable assistance for children who are having trouble with the death of someone close to them. If you are worried about a child in your life, speak to your Doctor or health centre about getting support.

WHEN GRIEF GETS IN THE WAY OF LIVING INA AUKATIA TE ARA KI TE ORA E TE POURITANGA

Sometimes grief can become intense or problematic, and can get in the way of leading our normal lives. This is OK in the early stages, but if the problems persist then we need to consider getting outside help. Some of the signs you may need extra help are:

- Persistent difficulty with sleeping
- Drinking too much or abusing drugs
- Neglecting daily responsibilities such as paying the bills, child care, personal hygiene and grooming

- Overwhelming and persistent feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, sadness or depression
- Intense feelings of guilt that you are still alive
- Not wanting to go out with friends or family, or not participating in our normal activities/hobbies
- Unable to function appropriately at work or at home
- You are having suicidal thoughts or thoughts about harming yourself or others
- You have physical symptoms that do not make sense

SUPPORT OPTIONS NGĀ KŌWHIRINGA TAUTOKO

Your Doctor

Grief can affect people in many ways, not only emotions but physical wellbeing too. If you are struggling with effects of grief such as trouble sleeping, weight loss or gain, or using too much alcohol or drugs, your doctor is a good person to talk to.

Counsellor

Counsellors can help you understand and work through emotional difficulties caused by grief. Seeing a counsellor gives you the opportunity to talk to someone confidentially about what you are going through.

Social Worker / Community Worker

Social workers can support and advise you as you deal with practical and personal problems related to loss and grief. You can talk things through with them as you make decisions, and they can help you find appropriate resources. Your health centre may be able to connect you with a social worker or community worker that can help.

Minister / Chaplain / Spiritual Carer

Grief can cause a spiritual crisis – sometimes people feel as if life has lost its meaning, or as if they have lost their faith. If you are struggling with questions, a minister or chaplain or spiritual carer from your local church or religious community may be able to listen and support you as you talk things through.

Work and Income New Zealand

If your financial situation has changed following the death of your family/whānau member, WINZ may be able to help. They can advise whether you are eligible for a Funeral Grant to go towards immediate expenses, and tell you about any on-going financial assistance that you may be entitled to.

Lawyer / Legal Counsel

If you have questions about wills and property, a lawyer can help. If you can't afford a lawyer, you may be able to get free legal advice through a Community Law Centre or Citizens Advice Bureau.

SOURCES OF SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

HE PŪ TAUTOKO ME NGĀ RAUEMI

The following is a selection of support groups and resources available in the Wellington area. Your GP, Community or Social support organisation, Chaplain, faith community/ church, Whānau Care Services, or Pacific Health Service may be helpful places to start.

If you or your family have been affected by a sudden and traumatic death, further information is available at CCDHB. Please ask your nurse for: 'A resource for people bereaved by sudden and traumatic death'.

SKYLIGHT

Skylight is a person-centred counselling service for people of all ages who have experienced loss or grief. Includes pre-schoolers, children, teenagers and adults.

Contact: Freephone 0800 299 100

Hours: Monday to Friday 9.00am-5.00pm

Website: www.skylight.org.nz

Cost: There is a cost but it is reduced for community service card holders. Low income families may be eligible to assistance from WINZ.

WIDOWED, SEPARATED OR DIVORCED (WSD) NZ

Support groups in Wellington and the Hutt Valley to help those who have lost a partner through separation, divorce or death.

Website: www.wsd.org.nz

YOUTHLINE (WELLINGTON OFFICE)

A team of volunteers available 24/7 to talk through anything by phone, text or email.

Phone: (04) 801 6924 - available 24/7

Website: www.youthline.co.nz

Cost: Free

SAMARITANS

The New Zealand Samaritans is a confidential listening and support telephone service operating 24 hours a day for people who may be feeling, depressed, lonely or even contemplating suicide.

Phone: 0800 726 666 - available 24/7

Website: www.samaritans.org.nz

Cost: Free

TALKING WORKS

A web based resource of registered counsellors.

Website: www.talkingworks.co.nz

Cost: variable

ASSOCIATION OF NZ COUNSELLORS

A web based resource of registered counsellors

Website: www.nzac.org.nz

Cost: variable

WORK & INCOME NEW ZEALAND

May provide financial assistance to cope with any financial changes as a result of your loss.

Phone: 0800 559 009

Website: www.workrkandincome.govt.nz

WHĀNAU CARE SERVICES AT CCDHB

Working with you to achieve the best health outcomes for Māori patients and their whānau.

Level 2, Cultural Centre, Wellington Regional Hospital

Phone: (04) 385 5999 ext 80948 or DDI: 04 806 0948

Email: wcs@ccdhb.org.nz

Hours: 8.00am-6.00pm Monday to Friday

PACIFIC HEALTH SERVICES AT CCDHB

Working with you to achieve the best health outcomes for Pacific Island patients and their families.

Level 2, Cultural Centre, Wellington Regional Hospital

Phone: (04) 806 2320

Hours: 8.30am-5.00pm Monday to Friday

CHAPLAINCY

Providing spiritual and pastoral care to all patients, their families and staff within the hospital setting.

Phone: extn 82124 or extn 82126

Chapel: Level 2, Cultural Centre, Wellington Regional Hospital

Feedback

CCDHB welcomes all feedback on our services. Feedback, good or bad, provides us with useful information about the patient experience.

You can make a complaint, compliment or suggestion in one of the following ways:

- **Fill in the online form:** www.ccdhb.org.nz/complaints.htm
- **Fill out a brochure:** Pick up one of our "Tell us what you think" brochures - available in all areas of the hospital
- **Phone:** Contact the Consumer Experience Facilitator on (04) 806 0724 or
- **Email:** feedback@ccdhb.org.nz

Contact us / Whakapā Mai

Capital & Coast DHB Phone: (04) 385 5999

Email: info@ccdhb.org.nz

www.ccdhb.org.nz

WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN GRIEVING

