



Noisy breathing at the end of life

As people near the end of their life, it is common for them to become weaker and less conscious. This makes it difficult to cough and clear secretions (mucus) from their throat and chest, causing the noisy or rattly breathing that you hear.

Is noisy breathing upsetting for the person?

By the time noisy breathing develops, most people will not be fully conscious. The noise of their breathing usually will not upset the person themselves and is not making them uncomfortable. Some people around them may become worried or upset. Noisy breathing is a normal and common event when people are dying.

What can be done?

Don't worry - the person you care about is not distressed or suffering. It may help if you put the person in a more upright position or onto their side.

Keep the mouth moist and comfortable as directed by the nurses.

Sometimes the doctor will prescribe medicine to dry up the secretions.

Be careful when offering food or drink to people who are not fully conscious as this can cause choking.

General advice:

- Please ask the nurse or doctor if you have any questions.
- You can help with practical things, but sometimes just being there is enough.
- Remember to look after yourself as best you can.
- Seek support from your family and friends.