



Noisy breathing at the end of life

As people near the end of their lives, 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. This may cause 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 person will not be aware of their noisy breathing. It can be upsetting for others. Noisy breathing is a normal and common event when people are dying.

What can be done?

It may help to change the person's position.

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

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

Sometimes the doctor will prescribe medicines to help dry up the secretions. Unfortunately these medicines may not always work.

General advice:

- You can help with these 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.
- Please ask the nurse or doctor if you have any questions.