

What can I do when I can't visit a loved one who is dying?

During these difficult times you may have a family member, friend or loved one who is in the last weeks or days of their life. You may be cocooning or current visiting restrictions may mean that you are unable to visit them. This is a very difficult situation to be in and you may find this very upsetting.

Visits are restricted as this is the best way to reduce the risk of you or other people you love getting the COVID-19 virus. This is a big sacrifice for you, your family and loved one. The Irish

Hospice Foundation recommends that when visiting in person is not possible, health and care settings are proactive in ensuring that patients and residents remain connected through the use a variety of methods to bring comfort, compassion and company to the dying person. Continued support should be provided for families. This should include providing guidance on how family members can use available technology to enable 'virtual visiting' to keep connected and by ensuring that information regarding your loved one is communicated clearly and sensitively.



Visiting guidance.

Current guidance from the HSE and the HPSC states that a compassionate, pragmatic and proportionate approach is required in the care of those who are dying and recommends that the presence of a person close to the resident should be facilitated in so far as it is possible, they should be aware of the potential infection risk. Please contact your family members or loved one's care providers, residential care facility, nursing home or hospital, for up to date information on visiting restrictions that may be in place and any precautions that need to be taken by visitors.

HSE & HPSC Interim Public Health and Infection Prevention Control Guidelines on the Prevention and Management of COVID-19 Cases and Outbreaks in Residential Care Facilities and Similar Units. Version 4 22 April 2020.

If you are not able to visit in person, here are some suggestions that you might find helpful.

- It might be helpful and reassuring to find out more about the care your loved one is getting. If another family member or friend is the main contact for your loved one, check with them first.
- Talk to the staff in the care setting about your concerns or any questions you have- staff may need consent from your loved one to discuss aspects of their care with you.
- Other family and friends may be able to visit and keep you up to date by phone, text or social media.

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Ways to connect with your loved one.

- It may be possible to phone the person, you may be able to talk to them or read to them over the phone. We appreciate this is not ideal and doesn't replace person to person visiting, but it can be a good way to keep in contact and feel connected.
- You can also video call and text message, liaise with staff if help is required to make sure your loved one's telephone is charged and close by them.
- If another family member or friend is able to visit your loved one, you could ask if they can help with a phone or video call.
- Even if your loved one isn't able to communicate with you, they may still be able to hear your voice on the phone or see you on a video call.

If your loved one needs support to use the phone, iPad or social media apps arrange with staff a time that your call can be made and the assistance given that your loved one might need. You may need to check when is the best time for you to call to get updates from staff too.

- You could also send a letter, email, gift or a card.
- Get children or grandchildren to draw or paint pictures, write messages and poems that can be delivered to your loved one.
- Take pictures of you and your family that can be sent to your loved one by phone or iPad.

Minding yourself.

You may have lots of different feelings about not being able to see your loved one. During this time of stress, friends and families can be a good source of support. It might be helpful to talk with them about this and your feelings.



Here are some useful websites that provide support and information.

- The Irish Hospice Foundation Care and Inform Hub has resources and information, including leaflets on bereavement, grief and loss www.hospicefoundation.ie/covid19careandinform/
- HSE Minding your mental health during the coronavirus outbreak www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/mental-health/covid-19/minding-your-mental-health-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak.html
- Family Carers Ireland www.familycarers.ie/coronavirus-covid-19-information-advice/
- Alone - Supporting Older people to age at home www.alone.ie/
- Aware Covid-19: Coping with Anxiety: www.aware.ie/mental-health-resources/anxiety-during-covid-19/
- The HSE has information about caring for someone with COVID-19, including a list of do's and don'ts and information about living with other people: www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/self-isolation-and-limited-social-interaction.html

This leaflet is brought to you by The Irish Hospice Foundation. If you would like to support us you can do so online at www.hospicefoundation.ie