



RESPIRATORY SECRETIONS

As a person gets closer to death, they lose their ability to swallow and clear secretions from their mouth, nose, throat and lungs. Fluids collect in the throat, and each breath may produce a “gurgling” or “rattling” noise. This noise may be disturbing to the patient’s caregivers and visitors, but is a common, natural part of dying, and usually does not cause the patient suffering or distress.

Tell Your Care Team About:

- Any increase in secretions from the mouth
- Patient distress with breathing, coughing, or gagging

How You Can Help:

- Position the patient on his/her side or in a position with the head above the chest
- Be sure the patient is not receiving too much fluid by mouth
- Discuss options with the Care Team. There are interventions that can help relieve these symptoms, including:
 - Decreasing or stopping artificial fluids being given through a tube
 - Giving prescribed medications
 - Your Care Team can discuss the use of drops that can be placed in the corners of the mouth to dry the excess fluids

Need more information or help? Call 633-3400 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to get live help. Thank you for letting us help care for you and your loved ones.