

Verification of expected death

Quick reference for registered nurses, based on Hospice UK guidance

For registered nurses trained and assessed as competent to verify expected adult deaths. Use alongside your local policy. The time of verification is the official time of death.

Service / area

Completed by

Date

Before the examination

- ☐ Standard infection control precautions
- ☐ Confirm identity against the records
- ☐ Note infections, radioactive implants, implanted devices; start ICD deactivation if needed
- ☐ Lie the person flat
- ☐ Leave tubes, lines, drains, patches and pumps in place; switch off infusions
- ☐ Discreet top-to-toe check for new injury (community: medicines stock count)

Examination: minimum 5 minutes

- ☐ No central pulse for at least 1 minute
- ☐ No heart sounds for at least 1 minute
- ☐ No respiratory effort over 5 minutes
- ☐ No pupil response to light (both eyes)
- ☐ After 5 minutes: no response to trapezius squeeze or supra-orbital pressure
- ☐ Any return of activity: observe for a further 5 minutes

After verification

- ☐ Complete the local verification form
- ☐ Tell the doctor (local process)
- ☐ Tell the funeral director or mortuary about infections, implants and ICD status
- ☐ Waste and PPE per local policy; hand hygiene
- ☐ Support the family, residents and colleagues

Suspicious circumstances: do not verify. Treat as an unexpected death, do not touch the body and call the police. You have the right to refuse to verify and to request the doctor or police.

Sources (checked 13 October 2026): Hospice UK: Care After Death: Registered Nurse Verification of Expected Adult Death (RNVoeAD) guidance, 6th edition, version 6.2 (updated 1 June 2026).

A quick-reference resource only. Always follow the person's care plan, your organisation's policies and procedures, and current national guidance.

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