



Secretions

While secretions may sound distressing to caregivers, it is important to remember that this is not distressing to your loved one. Near the end of life, the body continues to make secretions that cannot be cleared through coughing, swallowing, or otherwise moving the secretions out of the throat. This causes the secretions to pool in the back of the throat which may cause a noise with breathing that sounds like rattling.

To assist with clearing secretions, you will want to

- Lay the bed flat, raise the bed as high as you can, and position your loved one fully on one side in a motion called “logrolling.”
- Once they are on their side, you will place a towel under their cheek to absorb any secretions that may exit the mouth.
- Reposition your loved one using the logrolling technique every three to four hours and repeat as needed.
- To maintain the position, you may use a pillow that is placed at the chest or behind the back.

If needed, the head of the bed can be elevated slightly for comfort. Be sure to provide oral care every one to two hours, using a swab or a washcloth to remove any visible secretions. If you need further information regarding oral care, please see the video titled “Oral Care: Dentures and Toothbrush” for detailed instruction.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call the 24-hour number, 877-506-0149.