

Dealing with a Fever During the Dying Process



Some patients in the dying process will have fever and associated sweating. If the patient's extremities are cold from decreased circulation, it may be difficult to assess the presence of a fever by touch alone. Some health care professionals are reluctant to take the patient's temperature during the dying process for fear of disturbing the patient.

If a fever is suspected and the patient cannot hold a thermometer in his or her mouth, temperature can be assessed by axillary or rectal means. Generally, the patient is treated if he or she is experiencing signs and symptoms of discomfort associated with an elevated temperature.

Those who are actively dying can become very uncomfortable due to a high fever, and anti-pyretics are utilized as a comfort measure. Due to decreased oral intake, however, a low grade fever may occur. Under most circumstances, low grade fevers will not cause discomfort to the patient and may not need to be treated with anti-pyretics.