Steps to Relieve **Difficulty in breathing**

**Step 1**

**When breathing starts to become distressing:**
- Sit the person upright, if the person is able to sit up
- Loosen clothing
- If possible, encourage the person to lean forward and rest arms on table or pillow
- Have usual medications for difficult breathing been taken? If not, administer usual medication
- Turn on fan or open window to allow a breeze
- Make the room as peaceful and relaxing as possible

**Step 2**

**If difficulty in breathing continues and/or starts to worsen:**
- Administer: ................................................................. Together with .................................................................
- If no relief in 20-30 minutes administer another dose of:
  ..........................................................................................
- If still no relief in another 15 minutes, administer:
  ..........................................................................................

*Signature of RN __________________________ Date: _______
Advice is based on review of current medication order(s) and discussion with client / carer*

**Step 3**

**If breathing remains distressing:**
- Ring *<Palliative Care Service Contact Details>* for advice and/or
- Ring Ambulance as hospital admission may be required

Originally developed by Melbourne City Mission
Guidelines for implementation of Carer’s Symptom Management Sheets

Purpose: To inform clients / carers about what to do when existing symptoms worsen or as initial steps for a new symptom.

Summary:

A one page Carer’s Symptom Management Sheet is available for each common symptom. Each has the following steps:

Step 1 – Supportive measures for relieving the symptom. These measures can be implemented with client / carer at any time.

Step 2 – Pharmacological measures for relieving the symptom. This section can only be completed if:
- signed current medication order(s) are in place;
- the registered nurse has reviewed current medication order(s) and is competent and comfortable to provide this advice to the client / carer;
- medication (oral or injectable) and necessary supplies are kept in the home; and
- the client / carer are comfortable with the advice.

Step 3 – Unrelieved and distressing symptom.

Guidelines for implementing Carer’s Symptom Management Sheets:

1. Team discussion about the introduction of applicable Carer’s Symptom Management Sheets to client/carer.
   a. Ensure client has a carer who is able and willing to provide symptom management at home
2. Identify relevant symptoms for which a sheet should be provided
3. Consider providing sheet(s) as part of Carer’s Kit
4. Review signed current medication order(s)
5. If no medication order(s) are in place, provide sheet without completing Step 2
6. Ensure necessary supplies and medication is available in the home prior to completing Step 2
7. Discuss Step 2 process with client / carer and ensure they understand and are comfortable with it
8. Sign and date Step 2
9. Provide completed sheet(s) to client / carer
10. Make notes in client record including date when sheet(s) were provided, name of nurse, which symptom sheets were provided and if Step 2 was completed

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1 Carer’s Safety and Information Kit for Palliative Care Services, Gippsland Region Palliative Care Consortium

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