

## 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

## 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<sup>1</sup>
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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<sup>1</sup> Carer's Safety and Information Kit for Palliative Care Services, Gippsland Region Palliative Care Consortium