Tips for Careworkers: Recognising Deterioration

What it is: Deterioration is when a person’s state of health declines (worsens). They may:
• become bedbound (stay in bed)
• spend more time sleeping or resting
• have reduced intake of food (eat less)
• have difficulty with swallowing, or
• have fluctuating consciousness.

Why it matters: Recognising that a person is deteriorating is important so that:
• this can be discussed with the person and their family
• care is reviewed with the person (if able), the family and GP
• a palliative care plan or pathway can be started or changed
• care is given in line with the person’s wishes
• symptoms are managed appropriately
• support to the person, the family and staff can be provided.

Careworkers often care for people on a daily basis and may notice signs of deterioration.

What I need to know: Many people suffer from chronic (long-term) conditions that are not always recognised as life-limiting (e.g., dementia).

Do

Look out for and report to the nursing/supervisory staff if:
• a person has changes in level of usual activity or engagement including a reluctance to get out of bed
• a person needs help from others for care due to increasing physical or mental health concerns
• a person loses weight or stays underweight
• a person has poor general health that is getting worse or not improving
• symptoms persist despite appropriate management
• there are emergency transfers to hospital
• the carer increasingly needs help and support.

Do

Ask nursing/supervisory staff about SPICt4ALL, a tool to identify when a person’s health is declining.

Do

Ask nursing/supervisory staff to show you the forms used to help determine deterioration.
**My reflections:**

What tool can be used to tell if someone's health is deteriorating?

What changes should I report to nursing/supervisory staff?

**My notes:**