



How to create a comfort cart to serve residents and families spending their last days or hours together in long-term care (LTC)

Creating a comfort cart for end-of-life care provides essential support for residents and their families during a difficult time. The items should focus on physical and emotional comfort, as well as practicality.

The comfort cart is more than a mobile tray; it's a moment of kindness on wheels. Staffed by friendly volunteers, it brings residents and family/friends small comforts, including snacks & beverages, socks and cozy blankets, crossword puzzles, and other gifts and cute and calming distractions.

The comfort cart is part of a holistic approach to palliative care, which includes addressing psychosocial, physical and spiritual needs. Residents, family councils and LTC staff work together to develop and revise care plans and care cart ideas. The comfort cart can also include a music player, an essential oil machine, calming oils, and lotion for hand massages, books and magazines, and even refreshments for the family. Families need information about what to expect at the end of life. Families wishing to spend the night with their loved ones should be provided with the option, or at least informed of the care home policy. Complimentary meal tickets can also be provided.

To honor a resident in their final journey, some care homes have a "Code Butterfly". The LTC home creates a quiet environment by turning off the television and stopping the work they are doing to show respect for the residents and their families. Staff, residents, and families are invited to take a moment of pause as the body is escorted out of the home.

Comfort cart is "part of" a process, seeing the resident, family and staff through the final hours.

Planning and Preparation

1. **Choose a suitable cart:** Select a cart that is durable, easily sanitized, and aesthetically pleasing to create a "homey" feel.
2. **Obtain management and staff support:** Ensure all staff are trained in how to use and restock the cart and understand its purpose to facilitate smooth implementation.



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3. **Stock with essential items:** The cart should contain items for both the residents and their visiting family/friend members.
4. **Involve the family:** Encourage families to bring in sacred objects, photos, or personal mementos to personalize the resident's space and foster connection.

Suggested Comfort Cart Items

The cart should be stocked with a variety of items to address different needs.

For the Resident's Comfort

- **Soft, cozy items:** A warm blanket, soft non-slip socks, and an eye pillow.
- **Personal care items:** Lip balm or lightly scented hand lotion to combat dry skin, facial wipes, and a comb/brush.
- **Sensory items:** A CD/DVD/Bluetooth player with calming music CDs/DVDs, a portable fan (to help with shortness of breath), or a diffuser with calming essential oils.
- ECHO SHOW 5 <https://youtu.be/nUXDnsB4kVY?si=Rt7tcSVSYNociJmS>
- CRDL: <https://www.eugeria.ca/en/products/crdl?q=>
- LinkedIn:
https://www.linkedin.com/posts/louis-brier-home-and-hospital-our-residents-had-the-opportunity-to-experience-activity-7371972169305608192-oD6k?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAAAJhqGIBwh7h8iUCtrC0LiWqt62lasTcgpE
- **Adjustable lighting:** A floor lamp with soft lighting or battery-operated candles to create a peaceful ambiance.

For the Family/Visitors' Convenience and Support

- **Nourishment:** Bottled water, coffee/tea supplies, and easy-to-eat snacks like granola bars, cookies, or fruit.



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- **Toiletries:** Toothbrushes, toothpaste, and hand towels/wipes so they can stay comfortable.
- **Activities:** Puzzle books (crossword, Sudoku, etc.) with pens, magazines, or a journal for writing down thoughts or memories.
- **Grief resources:** Information on grief support, non-denominational spiritual literature, and laminated information about the final stages of life can be helpful.
- **Memento making:** Supplies for making keepsake hand molds or securing a lock of hair can offer comfort and a lasting memory.

Implementation Best Practices

- **Maintain cleanliness:** Ensure all reusable items and the cart itself are easily sanitized after each use.
- **Keep it stocked:** Designate specific staff members or volunteers to manage and restock the cart regularly to ensure items are always available.
- **Personalize the experience:** The goal is to create a peaceful, supportive environment. Staff should be encouraged to interact with families with empathy and offer items of sensitivity to their preferences.