



CANCERcare®

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fact sheet

THE IMPORTANCE OF HOSPICE CARE

When someone you love is facing a life-limiting illness, you and your family want to do whatever you can to ensure he or she gets the very best care. Hospice provides palliative care at the end of life.

PALLIATIVE CARE AND HOSPICE CARE: THERE IS A DIFFERENCE

Palliative care improves the quality of life throughout the treatment of a serious illness by providing practical, emotional and spiritual support. Hospice care is form of palliative care that focuses on relieving symptoms when someone living with a serious illness approaches the end of life.

WHAT IS HOSPICE CARE?

Like palliative care, hospice care uses a team approach and provides physical, emotional, spiritual and practical support. It focuses on both the patient and the family. It makes sure that the patient's goals for life and care are met.

Where is hospice care provided?

Hospice may take place in the patient's home, a nursing home or a hospital. For most, home is the usual setting, with a family member taking the job of primary caregiver. He or she may receive support from a hospice team and home health aides. At a nursing home or a hospital, the hospice staff also offers much support to the patient's family.

The focus of care is helping the patient to be as comfortable as possible. Special attention is paid to symptom management and pain control, which would allow the patient to be as alert and involved in life as possible.



In order to receive hospice care, the patient's outlook for survival must be **limited**, and his/her medical treatment must be aimed at relieving discomfort rather than curing the patient's illness. The hospice team consists of a doctor, nurse, social worker and rabbi/chaplain. They offer many services including medical management, practical assistance and emotional support. These services are tailored to the needs and wishes of the patient.

HOW DOES HOSPICE CARE HELP ME?

- Hospice is a Medicare benefit, so if you qualify for it, it is free to you.
- Hospice works with the family as well as the patient.
- Patients have choices about how and where they want to spend the rest of their lives.
- The goal of pain control and symptom management is to provide as high a level of comfort as possible, while still maintaining alertness.
- The goal of medical treatment is to achieve physical and emotional comfort so the patient and family can enjoy living life.

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- Patients are encouraged to stay active and enjoy what they love.
- When possible, the patient can be cared for in the home with loved ones and a familiar environment.
- Help from the hospice team is available 24 hours/7 days a week by phone.
- Members of the hospice team make home visits.
- After the death of a loved one, a social worker or rabbi/chaplain is available to help family and friends cope with the loss.

WHO ARE THE MEMBERS OF A HOSPICE TEAM?

Hospice staff is made up of several specially trained people who have experience working with patients and families with life-limiting illnesses. Hospice staff help the patient and family to be as comfortable as possible. The team consists of hospice doctors, nurses and social workers. Chaplains and others may also be part of the team. Patients, families and friends are also considered important people on the treatment team, which respects cultural values and traditions.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR HOSPICE CARE?

- Patients whose prognosis is about six months or less, verified by the hospice doctor.
- Patients who are no longer receiving treatment to cure the disease but who want to live comfortably. Many hospices will work with families whose ill relative does not know his/her prognosis. Hospices try to fit their program of care to meet the unique needs of the patient.

Who pays for hospice care?

Hospice is provided by Medicare free of charge. The services may vary by state, so check with your state's Medicaid agency. If you have private provider, check with your provider's policy.

How do I locate a hospice program?

To find a hospice in your local area, call the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO) at 800-658-8898 or visit www.caringconnections.org.



CancerCare® Can Help

Founded in 1944, CancerCare is the leading national organization providing free support services and information to help people manage the emotional, practical and financial challenges of cancer. Our comprehensive services include counseling and support groups over the phone, online and in-person, educational workshops, publications and financial and co-payment assistance. All CancerCare services are provided by professional oncology social workers and world-leading cancer experts.

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