

## About Hospice Care

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Hospice is medical care that is available for seriously ill people when a cure is no longer possible. The focus of hospice is on comfort care, symptom management and the quality of life and dignity for a person with a terminal illness. Hospice services are available to people of any age, religion, race or illness.

Hospice care is normally given at a person's home, but the hospice team can also provide care to people in special facilities, hospitals or nursing homes. The hospice staff will make regular visits to guide the care of the patient. The hospice staff cares for both the ill person and provides support, education and direction to those who care for the ill person.

Medicare and most insurance plans cover the costs for hospice care. Other resources may be available to help pay for hospice care, if you are unable to pay or do not have insurance coverage.

### Reasons Why People Choose Hospice Care

- The doctor has said the benefits of more treatment are small and that a cure is not expected.
- The ill person may be tired of having treatments or being in the hospital and decide they do not want any more treatments that are aggressive or prolong life.
- The person may not want any more tests, x-rays, scans or other procedures.
- The person may realize that they are nearing the end of life and they do not want aggressive treatments including cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
- Many people complete advance directives to make their wishes known about their health care choices. Advance directives tell your doctors and other health care workers what types of care you would like to have, and the person you would like to speak on your behalf, if you are not able to make medical decisions.

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**This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.**

For more information on Advance Directives, we encourage you to visit our video library at <http://cancer.osu.edu/patientedvideos>.

## The Hospice Care Team

The hospice care team meets regularly to evaluate and update the person's care plan. They will address medical, health, psychosocial, spiritual and family needs. This includes the review of the goals and plans to manage current problems and any new needs for the patient and their caregivers.

The hospice care team is an interdisciplinary team of professionals which includes:

- Your **doctor** or a hospice doctor to direct the care you receive from hospice. If your doctor is unable to continue to direct your care when you enroll in hospice care, the hospice doctor will provide this service.
- A **nurse** makes visits based on the needs of the patient and caregivers. The nurse makes sure the patient is comfortable and that the caregivers know how to provide care.
- A **hospice aide** makes visits to provide personal care and supports the caregivers in the care they give to the patient.
- A **social worker** makes visits, as needed, to help the patient and caregivers with emotional and practical concerns and to offer information on available resources.
- **Spiritual care** is also available to help the patient and caregivers with spiritual or religious needs.
- **Speech, occupational or physical therapists, dietary counselors or homemakers** may also work with people in hospice care, if needed.
- Trained **volunteers** help patients and caregivers in many practical ways. They may run errands, stay with the ill person while others shop, or may even help with walking a dog.
- The **hospice care team** provides guidance and support, but they do not replace the role of the caregivers.
- Follow-up **bereavement care** is offered to caregivers for one year after a person's death by members of the hospice care team.

## The Important Role of Caregivers

A person who chooses to use hospice care at home normally has one or more caregivers. Caregivers are family members or friends who are willing to provide day-to-day care when the person is no longer able to do their own care. Most caregivers say that giving home care is rewarding, but also very hard. Caregivers need to take steps to stay well and healthy themselves. The hospice team will make regular visits with the patient and caregivers to make sure they have the help and support they need.

**Caregivers must be willing to learn how to provide care. The hospice team will teach at-home caregivers how to care for their loved one.**

**Caregivers may need to do the following tasks:**

- Give medicines
- Learn how to use home medical equipment such as a hospital bed, oxygen, wheelchair and other medical supplies
- Do treatments, such as caring for a wound
- Help with personal care, such as bathing or cleaning up their loved one after an accident
- Safely move or reposition the ill person
- Prepare meals and feed their loved one
- Keeping the ill person safe from harm. For example, making sure there is no smoking in the room if the ill person is on oxygen

When needed, caregivers may have to make arrangements for extra help so the ill person has someone with them at all times. Families may choose to hire a nurse to provide care or they may have their loved one go to a nursing home where the hospice team can continue to direct their care.

It is important that all caregivers honor their loved one's decision to stop further treatment and use hospice services. Under hospice care, caregivers will be directed to call hospice if a problem develops, not the emergency squad or 911. This keeps their loved one from having emergency medical care procedures that they do not want.

## Other Benefits of Hospice Care

- **Symptom Control**

A person may be admitted to an inpatient hospice unit to help control a problem or symptom. This would be done to help find the best way to manage a difficult symptom. An inpatient hospice unit may be a special unit within a hospital, another medical facility or in its own building.

- **Respite Care**

Sometimes a person may be admitted to an inpatient hospice unit to give their at-home caregivers some time off or time away. This is called respite care. Caregivers may need a break, or they may have a health problem that needs attention. A stay in an inpatient hospice unit is for a week or less. Respite care may be used every few months.

- **Other Services**

Hospice care includes other services and benefits. It may help provide some medicines, home medical equipment, supplies and hospital services. At times, hospice can help provide or arrange for extra help in the home.

## How to Arrange Hospice Care

- If you think you might want hospice care, talk to your doctor or nurse and ask to see a social worker. The social worker can give you information about hospice services and ask for the referral from your doctor that is needed to make the arrangements.
- If you live outside Columbus, Ohio, the social worker can make the referral to a hospice in your area.
- If you are interested in hospice, you can also request a meeting with a hospice representative in your community to receive information and to ask any questions you may have about hospice care.
- You may also find it helpful to visit the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization at [www.nhpco.org](http://www.nhpco.org) or call their helpline at 1-800-658-8898 for information or to find a local hospice. The American Hospice Foundation is another resource for information. Their website is <https://hospicefoundation.org> and their telephone number is 1-800-854-3402.