

PALLIATIVE CARE

When you have a serious illness, symptoms can include pain and emotional distress. A special type of care called palliative care is available to help you get relief from these and other symptoms. You can receive palliative care at any stage of your serious illness, including when you are getting treatment.

Palliative care (pronounced pal-lee-uh-tiv) is specialized medical care for people with serious illness. It focuses on providing relief from the symptoms and stress of the illness and aims to improve quality of life for the patient and the family. Palliative care is provided by a specially-trained team of doctors, nurses, and specialists who work together to provide an extra layer of support. It is appropriate at any age and at any stage of an illness, and it can be provided along with curative treatment.

The goal of palliative care is to improve the quality of life for people with serious illnesses and their families. "Family" can be people related to us and those we choose to call family.

Palliative care can prevent or provide relief from symptoms such as pain, shortness of breath, fatigue, nausea, loss of appetite, problems with sleep, and emotional and spiritual distress. Another purpose of palliative care is to improve connections and communication among family members and providers of care. Palliative care can improve your quality of life when you are seriously ill.

Palliative care can be helpful if you:

- Suffer symptoms due to any serious illness of any length
- Experience physical or emotional pain that is not under control
- Need help understanding your situation and coordinating care

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Often a team of specialists provides palliative care. The team usually includes:

- Palliative care doctors and nurses
- Social workers and chaplains
- Pharmacists and nutritionists
- Counselors and others

This team works with your doctor and other health care providers to offer an extra layer of support by helping to control symptoms related to your illness and its treatment.

You can ask for palliative care and do not have to give up your primary health care provider or efforts to cure your illness.

Medicare, Medicaid, Veterans Health Administration benefits, and private health insurance cover many palliative care services. Many hospitals provide palliative care, and it can be provided in nursing homes and in your home as well.



Resources

Palliative Care, The Relief You Need When You're Experiencing the Symptoms of Serious Illness

National Institute for Nursing Research at the National Institutes of Health

English and Spanish Brochures:

<https://www.ninr.nih.gov/newsandinformation/publications/palliative-care-brochure>

GetPalliativeCare.org

Center to Advance Palliative Care

Information for consumers

<http://www.getpalliativecare.org/>

Hospital-based palliative care teams

Tool to locate hospital-based palliative care teams, which may also provide community-based care

<http://www.getpalliativecare.org/howtoget>

Home and Community Based Services for Veterans

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Information on palliative care and hospice services available to veterans

http://www.va.gov/GERIATRICS/Guide/LongTermCare/Home_and_Community_Based_Services.asp