



Health Focus

Palliative Care Services

What is Palliative Care?

Palliative care is special medical care for people with difficult to manage symptoms. This care is focused on giving patients relief from the symptoms, pain and stress of a serious illness. Palliative care is given to patients who need it – no matter what the diagnosis.

The goal is to improve quality of life for both the patient and the family. Palliative care is given by a team of experts. This team works with a patient's other doctors to provide an extra layer of support. Palliative care can help you at any stage in a serious illness, no matter how old you are. This care can be given along with treatment used to cure the condition. The palliative team also can help your loved ones deal with changes brought on by the illness.

What Do I Need To Do To Receive Palliative Care?

Anyone with a serious illness may ask for palliative care. Talk with your doctor or other health care providers about palliative care. A team member will be glad to talk with you about how palliative care can improve the care you are already receiving. However, only your doctor can order it.

Why is Palliative Care Important for Me?

When you have a serious illness, you may have pain, shortness of breath, loss of appetite, weakness, nausea and vomiting, constipation, anxiety, loss of energy or trouble sleeping. The palliative care team is trained to provide relief from these and other symptoms. They also will help with emotional and spiritual concerns. The team can work with you and your other care providers to help organize your care.

It is important that you understand the options you have about your care so you can make informed choices. Your palliative care team can work with you and your family to help decide what goals in life are most important to you at this time. They will make recommendations about which treatments are most likely to help you reach your most important goals.

If you want your doctors to make you as comfortable as possible while they continue to try to cure your disease, palliative care may be a good choice. Curative and palliative care can be used together when a patient has a complex, difficult to manage condition. A patient who chooses palliative care is one who would say, "I want you to make me as comfortable as possible and treat me with dignity and respect at the same time you are trying to cure my disease."

Many patients with serious illness have questions about what will happen to them because of their illness and how long they might have to live. Palliative care providers have extra training in talking with you about this. They also will help you think about what choices you have about where and how you want to spend that time.

The palliative team will help you decide who you would want to make health care decisions for you, if you are no longer able to make them yourself. They will also help you make choices about the type of care you would like to receive if your condition becomes critical and life threatening. They also will help you communicate those wishes to your medical team and to your loved ones, especially the person you have chosen to make decisions for you.

Patients with serious illness who choose to receive palliative care along with regular care often live longer. They also are more likely to have a better quality of life, spend less time in critical care units and have fewer hospital stays.