



Hospice FAQs

Who pays for hospice?

Medicare, Medicaid, Veterans Affairs, and private health plans all offer benefits that cover expenses related to a hospice diagnosis. Hospice pays for medications, medical equipment, and supplies that are related to a hospice diagnosis.

Who is eligible for hospice care?

Hospice care is for anyone with a life-limiting illness. This may include pulmonary disease, Alzheimer's, heart failure, kidney disease, COPD, Parkinson's, or any other disease that is life-limiting. To be eligible for hospice care, the patient's physician and the hospice medical director must certify that the patient has a life expectancy of six months or less if the disease progression were to run its normal course.

How can I manage to care for my loved one at home?

Hospice care is a team approach that includes a full interdisciplinary group with the patient's wishes at the center. Every patient has a medical director and a registered nurse to direct and manage care. You can decide if you would also like a certified nursing assistant to provide personal care, a social worker to assist with arranging practical matters and finding additional resources, a chaplain to provide spiritual care, and/or a volunteer to provide caregiver respite and keep the patient company. Together, hospice works with the patient and caregivers to provide education on how to provide care at home in the most comfortable and supportive way possible.

Will someone come to stay with us?

Members of the hospice team make scheduled and as needed visits, but hospice does not provide 24-hour care. There are nurses available by phone 24 hours a day to answer questions and address concerns, and a visit can be made at any time if needed.

Do I have to give up my medications?

A hospice provider will work with you to determine which medications best align with your goals and will provide the most symptom relief. Hospice will pay for your medications that are related to the terminal diagnosis, but if there are medications you choose to continue taking that hospice does not cover, you may do that as well.

Does hospice do anything that will make my life shorter or longer?

Hospice care focuses on comfort and improving quality of life, but does not provide care that will shorten or lengthen life. However, some research shows that those who receive hospice care may live longer than those who do not elect the services.



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How will hospice manage pain if it occurs?

The goal of hospice is to control and minimize pain as much as possible. We know that pain interferes with eating, sleeping, visiting, and general quality of life. There are many ways to address and manage pain, and the hospice team will work with the patient and family to determine how best to treat symptoms.

Is hospice linked to a religion?

No. Hospice is not connected to any religious organizations. Because of the special nature of hospice care, we do have spiritual care coordinators available for patients and families if desired. If preferred, they can also help connect you to someone in your own faith community.

Can we stop hospice care?

Yes. A patient can choose to stop hospice services at any time. You can also elect to start hospice again if circumstances change.

My loved one lives in a nursing home. What can hospice do that they can't?

Nursing homes are experts in long-term care. Hospice nurses are experts in symptom management and end-of-life care, and they are best equipped to deal quickly with urgent problems that arise. Other benefits of hospice include additional team members, more frequent personal care, volunteer visitors, paid medications and supplies, and bereavement follow-up for family members.

Can we go to the hospital while receiving hospice care?

If you're experiencing a crisis, pain that cannot be managed, or a significant change in condition, contact your hospice team immediately for assistance. In the event that your symptoms cannot be controlled at home, we will discuss options that may include a trip to the emergency department and/or a hospital stay.

How do we decide when it is time for hospice?

Only you can decide when the time is right. Your doctor may be the first to suggest hospice care, although some hesitate for fear you will think they are "giving up" on you. Hospice is not about giving up; hospice is about redirecting care towards your goals. If your doctor has not suggested hospice, it's important that you advocate for yourself so you can make an informed decision. Electing hospice earlier rather than later allows you to experience the benefits of hospice to the greatest extent.



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Who makes our health care decisions when we are on hospice?

You are always in control of your care and are encouraged to discuss your goals with your team. Hospice will make suggestions, but the decisions are always yours.

What happens if my loved one is still alive at the end of six months?

Hospice must periodically recertify that the patient has a prognosis of six months or less. If at any of these dates it appears that the patient has six months or less to live, then the patient can remain on hospice. If the course of the disease is slow, some people may live longer than six months, but will still be appropriate for hospice care.

What support can a hospice volunteer provide?

Hospice volunteers are an integral part of the team, providing companionship for patients and respite for caregivers. Each patient is carefully paired with a volunteer with similar interests and can provide music or pet therapy, play games, read books, or just lend a listening ear or helpful hand.

What if the patient's health improves?

Sometimes, with the extra care from hospice, a patient's health improves. They may start eating more and become more active. If they improve to the point that it appears they will live more than six months, then hospice will discontinue. The patient can return to hospice in the future when needed.

What does hospice do for us after my loved one dies?

A large part of hospice care is grief and bereavement support for family and friends. Ancora understands that this is a difficult time and provides after-care services through Full-Circle with no cost to families, as well as ongoing support groups and remembrance events for families following a death.