



Hospice Care

The Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How

What is hospice care? Hospice care includes pain and symptom management, emotional and spiritual support, and help with day-to-day activities and medical care, as well as support for caregivers and family. Hospice care prioritizes educating patients and their loved ones about how to maintain quality of life during advanced illness. Hospice care is different from palliative care which includes symptom management and supportive care, and can be accessed at any point during one's cancer diagnosis. Palliative care focuses beyond the diagnosis on the whole person, addressing nutrition, fatigue, insomnia, nausea, depression and offers different approaches to reduce pain, discomfort and to improve one's quality of life. You can refer to Sharsheret's resource on palliative care and learn more by clicking [here](#).

Who is on the hospice care team? Hospice care is typically provided by a team of healthcare professionals including doctors, nurses, social workers, and chaplains. They all work together to provide the best quality of life care.

When is hospice care appropriate? A person should speak to their doctor or medical team to determine if they are eligible for hospice care (generally have a life expectancy of six months or less). Often your healthcare team will suggest when it is time to consider hospice care.

Where is hospice care given? Hospice care can be provided in the comfort of a person's home or in a facility with rotating staff who are on call 24/7 to assist patients with pain and symptom management.

Why is hospice care important? The main reason people use hospice care is to receive comfort care in the final stages of their life and to provide emotional support for their caregivers. This can include assisting them with the emotional aspects of the coming days, as well as educating caregivers on how to best help with the physical needs of their loved one. Hospice care allows for the individual with an incurable disease to have a better quality of life and to live as comfortably as possible as they near the end of life while supporting their caregivers in the process.

How do I begin the hospice care journey? Bringing up and discussing hospice care can be a difficult conversation to start with one's doctor or healthcare team. Choosing the best option for you and your family, whether it's at home or at a hospice center, is the first step. It can be helpful to speak with others who are familiar with hospice care facilities to help guide your decision, such as a hospital social worker or someone on the treatment team. After this, it is

also important to discuss this decision with your loved ones.

Here are some tips to get started:

- Ask your doctor to explain your prognosis and if there are any treatment options or clinical trials to consider.
- Always ask questions. You and your loved ones may have questions about what hospice care looks like, what would be involved, and who would be involved.
- Consider your physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. You are the leader of the decision-making process and team.
- Share any wishes, hopes, and fears with your family and health care team. You can refer to Sharsheret's resources on creating a Living Will/Advance Directive [here](#).
- Talking about hospice care can bring up many emotions. You may want to share your feelings, childhood memories and stories with your loved ones so that they have something personal from you to connect with. Other ideas to explore include creating a [living legacy video](#), writing letters to family members, or keeping a daily journal of your thoughts and experiences.

For more information on hospice care, visit:

1. <https://www.cancer.org/treatment/end-of-life-care/hospice-care/what-is-hospice-care.html>
2. <https://hospicefoundation.org/Hospice-Care/Hospice-Services>

Sharsheret is always here for you. Our team of social workers are ready to talk about your emotions and needs surrounding the idea of taking these next steps and other issues that may come up. For additional questions about hospice care and how you can best advocate for yourself, contact Sharsheret at clinicalstaff@sharsheret.org or 866.474.2774.