

A Guide to Palliative Care

What is Palliative Care?

Palliative care is a medical specialty to help improve the quality of life for people living with a chronic and terminal diseases. The [goal of palliative care](#) focuses on providing relief from pain and other symptoms associated with severe illness. Palliative care works with curative treatment for the diagnosed disease while providing treatment for pain and providing comfort. A palliative care team consists of specially trained doctors, nurses, and specialists such as nutritionists and social workers. The team for palliative care is personalized and varies based on the level of care that is needed. Palliative care can be provided in multiple settings, including palliative home care, assisted living facilities, outpatient clinics, and palliative care hospitals.

Palliative Care Lowers Symptom Burden for Patients

Palliative care is provided to lower the symptom burden for patients to provide the best quality of life for themselves and their families. Many patients on palliative care suffer from serious life-threatening diseases, including cancer, heart disease, lung disease, dementia, end stage liver, kidney failure, and much more. Symptom burdens do not have to be specific to the condition. They can also include depression, anxiety, caregiver strain, and more. The palliative care team will help you with emotional strength to carry out day to day life activities to improve the quality of life for the patient and families. Palliative care will also assist with symptom burdens of the disease itself, including nausea, fatigue, shortness of breath, and more.

Palliative Care Improves Quality of Life for Patients and Their Families

Palliative care focuses on improving the quality of life for patients and their families in several ways. Palliative care at home offers an element of healing and treatment while providing the comfort and security of being home. Palliative care at home will allow patients and family members to have extra support at home while staying away from emergency rooms and hospitals. Palliative care nursing can help improve the quality of life for patients and families both in house and in palliative care centers. Palliative care nurses help alleviate suffering by responding to health issues, including patients' physical, social, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing in palliative care.

What Are the Goals of Palliative Care?

The goals of palliative care are to help match your treatment choices with your comfort level giving you control over your care. With palliative care, physical and emotional needs are treated. The care plan differs from person to person depending on their ailments and symptoms. Physical symptoms such as pain, fatigue, nausea, shortness of breath can be addressed. Emotional support is provided during [palliative care to help patients and their families](#). During these times, patients and families may feel depressed, anxious, and scared. These emotions can be treated with therapy and spiritual care. Caregiver strain is when the family or friend helping take care of the sick loved one becomes overwhelmed with responsibility. Palliative care specialists can assist caregivers in coping by providing them with needed support.

Home-Care Alternatives Including Comfort Care and Hospice Care

Many people do not know the difference between palliative care, hospice care, and comfort care. Many people also think they are the same thing.

-Palliative care and hospice difference-

Hospice and palliative care strive to make patients comfortable and provide support for caregivers and families. Hospice care provides comfort to patients when the decision to no longer receive curative care for the disease is made. Patients on hospice care typically have six months or less to live. While on hospice, the patient's illness is no longer treated. Palliative care provides support for the patient while allowing the patient to receive curative treatment.

-Palliative care Vs. Comfort care-

Comfort care is an end-of-life approach to comfort patients during the transition to give them dignity therapeutic care at the end of their illness. While hospice may focus on some curative approach to the disease process, comfort care focuses on symptom control and pain relief during the final moments of life.

When Should a Patient Start Palliative Care?

Palliative care should be started if you or your loved one has been diagnosed with a chronic or life-threatening illness. [Studies](#) show that starting palliative care early in diagnosis can lead to a higher survival rate and higher treatment compliance than patients who have delayed starting palliative care. Once diagnosed with a chronic or life-threatening disease, people tend to visit the hospital more frequently, make multiple visits a year to the emergency room, have harmful side effects from curative treatments, and have problems with self-care. Once someone experiences these issues with their diagnosis, they should consider palliative care to assist.

Who Can Benefit from Palliative Care?

Anyone with a serious illness can benefit from palliative care, whether chronic, life altering, or life threatening. Palliative care is available to anyone regardless of age, prognosis, stage of disease, or type of treatment being received. Palliative care benefits people who want to treat their illness and receive supportive care. Starting palliative care early in a diagnosis has been [shown](#) to improve quality of life and increase the life expectancy of patients with serious illnesses. Palliative care also helps improve the quality of life of the family and loved ones on palliative care. Palliative care can help patients understand choices for their medical treatment through organized services available from early on, helping with general discomfort to later in the disease process.

Is Palliative Care Right for You or Your Loved One?

How do you know if palliative care is right for you or your loved one? Palliative care may be right for you or your loved one if there is a diagnosis for a serious illness. The disease does not have to be terminal to qualify for palliative care. The condition can be a new diagnosis or early onset disease. If you or your loved one wants to undertake curative treatment for an illness while receiving extra support for:

- Pain
- Shortness of breath

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Caregiver strain
- Help meet treatment goals

Then palliative care may be right for you.

Patients with Serious and Chronic Illnesses

Palliative care can be for serious and chronic illnesses such as:

- Cancer
- Dementia
- Heart failure
- chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder
- HIV/AIDS
- Multiple sclerosis
- Parkinson's

Including other chronic illnesses that people have to live with daily can qualify for palliative care treatment. Palliative care can work with physicians caring for these diseases while providing extra care and support to the patient and family members. Palliative care can help you, and your loved ones understand all treatment options and provide care teams to assist with emotional and social support needs.

Elderly People in Late Stages of Life

Palliative care can be [beneficial for elderly people](#) in the late stages of life who have general pain and disability in life. As people age, the body becomes more susceptible to diseases and chronic pain. Patients on palliative care, regardless of age, spend less time in the hospital and emergency rooms than patients without palliative care. According to the center for disease control ([CDC](#)), around 85% of the elderly population has chronic health problems, and 60% of the elderly population has at least two or more chronic conditions. These chronic conditions can be a burden in the late stages of life, and palliative care can help.

How Does Palliative Care Differ from Hospice?

The Palliative care and hospice difference that many people confuse is that palliative care does not treat illness or disease. Palliative care offers to work with curative treatments while providing extra care and support, while hospice does provide curative treatment. For example, someone with cancer may continue chemotherapy treatment while on palliative care but not hospice care. Palliative care can be offered to anyone with a serious illness. In contrast, hospice care is provided for people with a short time to live. Both hospice and palliative care will help relieve chronic symptoms.

Palliative Care Can Be Received at Several Stages

Palliative care can be received at any stage of a disease process. However, there are many cases, such as a cancer diagnosis, where it is [recommended](#) to start earlier rather than later. Palliative care started early in a disease process has been [proven](#) to improve the patient's quality of life, improve mental

health, and increase survival rates of chronic diseases. However, palliative care can be started at any stage in the disease process. Palliative care can offer dignity, comfort, and support during the early and late stages of illnesses. When palliative care is on board to help with treatment plans, patients and loved ones will function better with daily life and understand the plan of care.

During and After Curative Care

Palliative care can be started during and after curative care to manage your illness. During curative care, palliative care will assist and support every step of the way as treatment goals are made. After receiving curative care, you may have new symptoms or side effects that palliative care can help with after treatment is completed. Palliative care can continue to help you on your journey back into health with emotional and spiritual support after you have finished your treatments. Patients may continue to choose curative treatment with palliative care from diagnosis to end of life.

How Does Palliative Health Care Fit into Prospero Health's Model?

Prospero's Health Model connects with body, mind, and family. At Prospero, we help empower people facing serious illness to live their best lives by providing care when and where they need it while giving attention to all aspects of their wellbeing. For people living with complex health conditions, Prospero provides compassionate home-based medical care to make the following chapters in life the best they can be. We offer 24/7 care support day and night to address your needs. A registered nurse will meet you in your home for scheduled visits to address medical needs and help communicate concerns to your doctors. Prospero will provide social workers with extra resources and support during your treatment to keep you connected to your community.

Palliative Care is Only a Part of the Journey

Palliative care is only a part of the journey to living with and treating serious illnesses. Palliative care helps to improve a patient's quality of life while on this journey. For most patients, the journey to recovery can cause pain stress and is full of twists and turns. Palliative care is here to help make this journey more manageable by providing extra care and support. From the beginning of a diagnosis to its recovery, or even end-of-life care and transitioning, palliative care will help along the way.

Prospero Health's Services Offer a New Kind of Home-Based Care

The care provided is centered around the wishes of the patient. Prospero's Health Services help create communities where care is determined by patient choice and preference, not dictated by circumstance. Prospero's care team meets people with complex or chronic illnesses in the home to learn their story, understand how they want the next chapters of their life to look, and build trust.

Insurance Coverage and Medicare for Palliative Care

Your current benefit provider may cover palliative care insurance. Palliative care Medicare coverage may also be eligible under your plan as coverage varies from state to state. Veterans may also contact the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) to see if they are eligible for palliative care. A social worker from your health care team may be able to help clarify whether or not palliative care is covered and what your cost would be.

Contact Prospero Health for a Solution That Goes Beyond Palliative Care

[Contact](#) Prospero today for a solution to help your needs that go beyond palliative care. Whether you

are interested in services for yourself, a loved one, or just looking for more information, we are here to help.