

Stopping Medications in Hospice Care

What is happening

Entering hospice care represents a change in focus—from long-term disease prevention to **comfort and quality of life**.

At this stage, many medications that were previously important may:

- No longer provide benefit
- Cause unwanted side effects
- Be difficult to take

Why medications are often stopped

1. Medications may no longer be needed

Some medications are designed to prevent long-term complications (such as heart disease or stroke).

At this stage, these benefits are less relevant.

2. Side effects can increase

As the body becomes weaker, medications may cause more problems, such as:

- Dry mouth
- Low blood pressure
- Low blood sugar
- Nausea
- Constipation

3. Focus shifts to comfort

- Taking many medications can be difficult
- Some medications may interfere with others
- The goal is to **simplify care and improve comfort**

What you may see

- Fewer medications being given
- Changes in medication schedules
- The hospice team reviewing medications regularly

Medications often stopped

These are commonly no longer needed:

- Cholesterol medications (statins)
- Vitamins and supplements
- Osteoporosis medications
- Some eye drops for glaucoma (*discuss with hospice team*)

Medications that may be adjusted or stopped

These require careful discussion and sometimes gradual reduction:

- Blood thinners or aspirin
- Diabetes medications
- Blood pressure medications
- Thyroid medications
- Dementia medications

Some medications—especially those affecting the **heart or brain**—may need to be **tapered (reduced slowly)**.

What you can do

- Review all medications with your hospice team
- Ask questions about:
 - What each medication is for
 - Whether it is still needed
- Follow guidance on stopping or reducing medications
- Focus on comfort rather than long-term prevention

Do not stop medications on your own without guidance.

When to call hospice

- You are unsure whether a medication should be continued
- New symptoms appear after a medication is stopped
- You have concerns about side effects
- You are unsure how to reduce or stop a medication