

What to Expect from Hospice Care

What hospice care focuses on

Hospice care is focused on:

- Comfort
- Quality of life
- Relief of suffering
- Emotional and spiritual support

The hospice team works together to support both:

- The patient
- The caregivers and family

Hospice support is available 24/7

A hospice nurse and physician are always available on call.

The hospice team will provide:

- Phone numbers for questions or urgent concerns
- Guidance about when to call

You should call if:

- A concern cannot wait until the next scheduled visit
- Symptoms suddenly worsen
- You are unsure what to do

Who is part of the hospice team?

Physician

The hospice physician:

- Certifies hospice eligibility
- Reviews medications and care plans
- Prescribes medications
- May visit if needed

Nurses

Hospice nurses:

- Usually visit at least weekly
- Help manage symptoms and medications
- Answer questions and provide education
- Assess comfort and safety

A nurse usually visits on the first day of hospice care.

LVNs and CNAs

LVNs and nursing assistants may:

- Help with bathing and hygiene
- Assist with skin care
- Help with supplies and equipment
- Report concerns to the nursing team

Visits are often several times per week depending on need.

Social workers and chaplains

These team members help with:

- Emotional support
- Spiritual concerns
- Family stress
- End-of-life planning and coping

What hospice provides

Hospice is responsible for providing items related to:

- Comfort
- Symptom management
- The terminal illness

This may include:

- Comfort medications
- Oxygen and oxygen supplies
- Hospital bed
- Wheelchair or transfer equipment
- Bedside commode
- Diapers, pads, and other basic supplies

The hospice team should also provide:

- Education
- Support
- Guidance about medications and care

What hospice does NOT provide

Hospice is not 24-hour in-home care

Family members or caregivers usually continue to provide:

- Day-to-day supervision
- Feeding
- Toileting
- Repositioning
- Most routine care between visits

Visits are not usually daily

Visit frequency depends on:

- Patient needs
- Symptom severity
- Safety concerns

The hospice team may adjust visits if needs increase.

Some medications may not be covered

Hospice may not provide medications that:

- Are unrelated to comfort
- Are no longer beneficial at this stage of illness

The hospice team will review medications with you.

Comfort medications are important

Medications provided during hospice admission are an important part of maintaining comfort.

The hospice team can help explain:

- What each medication is for
- When to give it

- What side effects to expect
- Never hesitate to ask questions.

When to call hospice

Call the hospice team if:

- Symptoms suddenly worsen
- Pain or breathing problems increase
- Medications are not helping
- A fall or injury occurs
- You are unsure what to do
- You feel overwhelmed or unsupported