

Topics to Discuss with the Hospice Team

Why these conversations matter

Early conversations with the hospice team can help:

- Clarify wishes and goals
- Improve comfort and planning
- Reduce stress during difficult moments
- Help the hospice team provide more personalized care

Many of these discussions are best started during the first week of hospice care.

Treatment preferences and medical decisions

Important topics may include:

Resuscitation and emergency planning

- Is there a Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) order in place?
- Have Advance Directive or POLST forms been completed?

The hospice team can help explain these forms and assist with planning.

Hospitalization preferences

Discuss:

- Whether there are situations where hospitalization would still be desired
- Whether certain treatments (such as antibiotics) would still be wanted

These decisions may change over time and can always be revisited.

Comfort priorities

Some patients prioritize:

- Maximum comfort and symptom relief

Others may prioritize:

- Remaining more awake and alert, even if symptoms are less controlled

There is no single “right” answer. The hospice team can help guide these discussions.

Supportive therapies and services

Ask about supportive services such as:

- Music therapy
- Art therapy
- Meditation or relaxation support
- Support groups

Availability may vary by hospice program.

Beliefs, values, and emotional concerns

It is very helpful for the hospice team to understand:

- Religious or spiritual beliefs
- Important traditions or practices
- Personal values and priorities

Some patients may also have:

- Emotional concerns
- Family conflicts
- Desire for reconciliation or closure
- Wishes to document thoughts or memories

Hospice teams often include:

- Chaplains
- Social workers
- Counselors trained to discuss difficult topics

Symptoms to discuss early

The hospice team should understand any symptoms that are already present, including:

Shortness of breath

- When it occurs
- How severe it feels

Pain

- Where it occurs

- How often it happens
- How severe it is

Emotional symptoms

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Fear or distress

Bowel problems

- Constipation
- Diarrhea
- Difficulty with bowel movements

The hospice team can provide medications and strategies to help manage these symptoms.

General reminder

You should always feel comfortable discussing:

- Questions
- Concerns
- Changes in symptoms
- Emotional or spiritual worries

Hospice care is designed to support both the patient and the family.