

# What should you know about palliative care?

**Palliative care** (pronounced pal-lee-uh-tiv) *specializes in the relief of the pain, symptoms and stress of serious illness. The goal is to prevent and ease suffering and to offer patients and their families the best possible quality of life. It is useful at any stage of an illness. And it can be provided at the same time as treatment that is meant to cure you.*

**1** **Where do I receive palliative care?**  
Palliative care can be offered in a number of places. These include hospitals, long-term care facilities and hospices, or at home.

**2** **Does my insurance pay for palliative care?**  
Most insurance plans cover all or part of the palliative care treatment you receive in the hospital, as with other hospital and medical services. This is also true of Medicare and Medicaid. Drugs and medical supplies and equipment may also be covered. If costs concern you, a social worker or financial consultant from the palliative care team can help you with payment options.

**3** **How do I start getting palliative care?**  
Ask for it! Start by talking to your doctor or nurse. Tell your family, friends and caregivers that you want palliative care. Then ask your doctor for a referral.

**4** **How do I know if palliative care is right for me?**  
Palliative care may be right for you if you suffer from pain or other symptoms due to a serious illness. Serious illnesses may include: cancer, cardiac disease, respiratory disease, kidney failure, Alzheimer's, AIDS, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) and multiple sclerosis. Palliative care can be provided at any stage of illness and along with treatment meant to cure you.

**5** **What can I expect from palliative care?**  
You can expect relief from symptoms such as pain, shortness of breath, fatigue, constipation, nausea, loss of appetite and difficulty sleeping. Palliative care helps you carry on with your daily life. It improves your ability to go through medical treatments. And it helps you better understand your condition and your choices for medical care. In short, you can expect the best possible quality of life.

**6** **Who provides palliative care?**  
Usually a team of experts, including palliative care doctors, nurses and social workers, provides this type of care. Chaplains, massage therapists, pharmacists, nutritionists, and others might also be part of the team. Generally, each hospital has its own type of team.

**To learn more go to  
[www.getpalliativecare.org](http://www.getpalliativecare.org)**

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