

# Palliative Care. What You Should Know.



To learn more about palliative care, go to [www.getpalliativecare.org](http://www.getpalliativecare.org)

Palliative care (pronounced pal-lee-uh-tiv) *is specialized medical care that focuses on relief of the symptoms and stress of serious illness. The goal is to prevent and ease suffering and to improve quality of life for patients and their families. Palliative care is appropriate at any age and any stage of an illness. And, it can be provided at the same time as curative treatment.*

**1 Where do I receive palliative care?**  
Palliative care is provided primarily in the hospital. However, it can also be provided in long-term care facilities and at home.

**2 Does my insurance pay for palliative care?**  
Most insurance plans, including Medicare and Medicaid, cover palliative care. If costs concern you, a social worker or financial consultant from the palliative care team can help you.

**3 How do I get palliative care?**  
Ask for it! Most of the time, you have to ask your doctor for a referral. Tell your doctors, nurses, family and caregivers that you want palliative care.

**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, HIV/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. 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.

**7 How does palliative care work with my own doctor?**  
The palliative care team works with your own doctor to provide more support for you and your family. The team provides expert symptom management, extra time for communication and help navigating the health system.