



Hospice Care

Hospice programs are available to help terminally ill individuals live their remaining days with dignity. These programs can assist the family (or other designated caregiver) in making the patient as comfortable as possible, and assistance is available around the clock, seven days a week.

Hospice is primarily a concept of care, not a specific place of care. Hospice care usually is provided in the patient's home. It also can be made available at a special hospice residence. Hospice is a combination of services designed to address not only the physical needs of patients, but also the psychosocial needs of patients, their loved ones. Hospice combines pain control, symptom management and emotional and spiritual support. Seniors and their families participate fully in the health care provided. The hospice team develops a care plan to address each patient's individual needs. The hospice care team usually includes:

- The terminally ill patient and his or her family caregiver(s)
- Doctor
- Nurses
- Home health aides
- Clergy or other spiritual counselors (e.g., minister, priest, rabbi)
- Social workers
- Volunteers (if needed, and trained to perform specific tasks)

- Occupational, physical, and/or speech therapists (if needed)

As with many end-of-life decisions, the choice to enroll in a hospice care program is a deeply personal thing. It depends almost as much on the patient's philosophy of living and spiritual beliefs as it does on his or her physical condition and the concerns of family members.

HOW CAN I PAY FOR HOSPICE CARE?

Medicare, private health insurance, and Medicaid (in most states) cover hospice care for patients who meet eligibility criteria. Private insurance and veterans' benefits also may cover hospice care under certain conditions. In addition, some hospice programs offer health care services on a sliding fee scale basis for patients with limited income and resources. To get help with your Medicare questions, call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227, TTY/ TDD: 1-877-486-2048 for the speech and hearing impaired) or visit: <http://www.medicare.gov>.

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT HOSPICE CARE?

Caring Connections, a program of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO), is a national consumer and community engagement initiative to improve care at the end of life. The program offers a web site and a HelpLine 800-658-8898. Visit <http://www.hospiceinfo.org> to learn more.

Another resource is the Hospice Foundation of America, which can be reached by calling 1-800- 854-3402 or by visiting the organization's website at <http://www.hospicefoundation.org>.

The Hospice Association of America provides information about hospice programs and how terminally ill patients and their families can find hospice services in their area. Call 202-546-4759 or visit the association's website at <http://www.nahc.org/HAA/consumerInfo.html>.

Hospice Net at <http://www.hospicenet.org> is one more website where you can get information about how to find a hospice that is right for you.

To find out more about hospice programs where you live, you can contact your local aging information and assistance provider or area agency on aging (AAA). The Eldercare Locator, a public service of the Administration on Aging (at 1-800-677-1116 or <http://www.eldercare.gov>) can help connect you to these agencies.

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