

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT PALLIATIVE CARE

In the Clinic
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What Is Palliative Care?

When you have a serious health condition (a chronic disorder that cannot be cured), you need special care and attention. Living with a serious health condition can be hard in many ways. It can affect:

- How your body feels
- Your emotional health
- Your family's and friends' emotional health

Palliative care provides the special care you need while living with a serious health condition. You can get palliative care while you are in a hospital or at your doctor's office, and it includes the following:

- Help learning how to manage your health condition
- Symptom relief
- Help feeling better day-to-day
- Support for you and your loved ones
- Answers to your questions about care planning or the future
- Support in having conversations about your wants, needs, and wishes with your doctor and loved ones
- Help making plans for the future

Who Is on My Palliative Care Team?

Your palliative care team will teach you about treatments and support you in making decisions about your health. This team can also help educate and give support to your loved ones. Your care team will usually include:

- A doctor
- A nurse
- A chaplain
- A social worker

What Is the Difference Between Palliative Care and Hospice Care?

- Hospice, while also a special type of care for persons who have a serious health condition, is for those expected to die within 6 months.
- Palliative care is for all patients in all stages of a serious health condition. This can mean right after you are diagnosed and any time after that.

How Will It Help My Symptoms?

It can be very hard to live with a serious health condition. Many people have:

- Pain that won't go away
- Trouble breathing
- Nausea
- Confusion or anger
- Sadness or depression



- Less appetite
- Weight loss

There are treatments, medicines, and therapies that can help you feel better and provide relief from:

- **Pain.** For mild or moderate pain, your doctor may suggest over-the-counter pain medicines like acetaminophen or nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. For more severe pain, you may be prescribed strong pain medicines like opioids. Be sure to follow your doctor's instructions on how to take them.
- **Breathing trouble.** Your doctor may prescribe medicines to help with your breathing. He or she may also suggest pulmonary rehabilitation, which helps you learn how to breathe better and cope with breathing problems.
- **Depression or anxiety.** There are medicines that might help you feel better on a day-to-day basis. It might also help to talk to your palliative care team about how you feel.
- **Nausea or vomiting.** There are medicines that can help you feel less nauseous and prevent vomiting. Some medicines might even help you feel hungry again.

Your treatment will depend on your symptoms. Ask your palliative care team about what treatment options are right for you.

Questions for My Doctor

- What is the best way to plan for my future?
- Where can I find support for me and my loved ones?
- Can we discuss what I want for my future?
- How will I feel as my health condition progresses?
- Who can I talk to about my wants and needs?
- What is the best way to manage my symptoms now?

For More Information

American College of Physicians

www.acponline.org/practice-resources/patient-education/online-resources/end-of-life

MedlinePlus

<https://medlineplus.gov/palliativecare.html>

National Institute of Nursing Research

www.ninr.nih.gov/sites/www.ninr.nih.gov/files/palliative-care-brochure.pdf



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