

# PALLIATIVE CARE: WORKING AS A TEAM



## TO IMPROVE YOUR QUALITY OF LIFE

*Palliative care is about living life fully while dealing with the uncertainties of serious illness. The palliative care team supports you and your family in living the best life possible.*

— Dr. Stu Farber  
Palliative Care Specialist

Having a serious illness affects everyone differently. If you are having physical or emotional pain, support is available. It's called palliative care.

### What is palliative care?

Palliative (pronounced pay-lee-a-tive or pal-ee-a-tive) means relieving and lessening. Palliative care is specialized care that helps relieve and lessen the symptoms, pain, and stress resulting from a serious illness or disease, such as cancer, dementia, heart disease, HIV/AIDS, kidney failure, liver disease, lung disease, multiple sclerosis, and Parkinson's disease. It is provided by a hospital team of palliative care specialists that supports and comforts you and your loved ones during any stage of your illness, whether it is curable, chronic, or life-threatening.

The goal of palliative care is to improve your quality of life by meeting you and your loved one's physical, emotional, and spiritual needs in a coordinated way. A palliative care team can help you with quality of life and symptom issues such as pain, shortness of breath, fatigue, constipation, loss of appetite, sleep problems, anxiety, and depression.

Palliative care is different than hospice. Palliative care is not end-of-life care and does not require you to give up any treatment you are receiving to cure or manage your illness. People on hospice can also receive palliative care.

### How can palliative care help me?

Palliative care provides an extra layer of support for you and your loved ones, and does not replace the care you are receiving from your healthcare providers. It also helps coordinate your care between you and your healthcare providers. A palliative care team gives you the time and attention to:

- Help you navigate the healthcare system
- Guide you through complex medical decisions
- Help you talk openly with your loved ones and healthcare providers
- Provide you relief from pain and other uncomfortable symptoms
- Provide you and your loved ones emotional and spiritual support



*We were overwhelmed when we heard the diagnosis. The effects and treatment of the disease would have been devastating without the palliative care team. They helped us lessen the pain and fatigue, deal with emotional stress, and communicate better.*

— Palliative Care Patient



Healthy people in healthy places

An initiative of Washington State Department of Health

This publication was supported by Cooperative Agreement #5U58DP000793-04 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

For persons with disabilities, this document is available on request in other formats. To submit a request, please call 1-800-525-0127 (TDD/TTY call 711).

February 2013

## Who is on the palliative care team?

---

A palliative care team can include doctors, nurses, social workers, pharmacists, nutritionists, spiritual advisors, and mental health specialists. The team is based on each patient's individual needs and goals.

## How does it work?

---

After getting a palliative care referral from your healthcare provider, you may meet with a palliative care team or doctor to determine your needs and preferences. You may have the choice to meet with all of your team members together or one-on-one with certain team members. You can receive palliative care at a hospital, outpatient clinic, nursing home, assisted living facility, or at your home.

## When can I receive palliative care?

---

Palliative care is appropriate for people of all ages and can be started at any stage of a serious illness or disease. It can be provided as early as the illness is diagnosed, and it is never too late to begin. You do not need to have an illness or disease that is terminal in order to receive palliative care.

## How much does it cost?

---

The cost for palliative care depends on the type of services you need, but it is generally covered by health insurance, including Medicare and Medicaid. Contact your insurance company to see if they cover palliative care. Financial assistance is often available for those without health insurance. Talk with a social worker or your hospital's financial counselor if you are not covered by insurance.

## How do I start palliative care?

---

Ask your healthcare provider for a referral for palliative care, especially if you need help understanding your situation or if your illness is causing you physical or emotional pain. You can also find hospitals in your area that provide palliative care by going to the Palliative Care Provider Directory of Hospitals website below.

## More information

---

Call your local hospital for more information on palliative care, or visit the websites below.

- Cancer Care: [www.cancercare.org/patients\\_and\\_survivors](http://www.cancercare.org/patients_and_survivors)
- Caring Connections: [www.caringinfo.org](http://www.caringinfo.org)
- Compassion and Choices of Washington: [www.compassionwa.org](http://www.compassionwa.org)
- International Association for Hospice & Palliative Care — Resources for Patients and Relatives: [www.iasp-pain.org](http://www.iasp-pain.org)
- National Cancer Institute — Palliative Care in Cancer: [www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet/Support/palliative-care](http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet/Support/palliative-care)
- Palliative Care Provider Directory of Hospitals: [www.getpalliativecare.org/providers](http://www.getpalliativecare.org/providers)
- Washington State Hospice and Palliative Care Organization: [www.wshpco.org](http://www.wshpco.org)