

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT PALLIATIVE CARE

In the Clinic
Annals of Internal Medicine

What Is Palliative Care?

When you have a serious health condition, you need special care and attention. A serious health condition is chronic and cannot be cured. Living with a serious health condition can be hard in many ways. It can affect how your body feels, your emotional health, and your family's and friends' emotional health.

Palliative care is a way to give you 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. You do not need a specialist to receive palliative care, and many physicians can provide this treatment. When you get palliative care, you can expect to receive:

- Help in learning how to manage your health condition
- Relief from your symptoms
- Help in feeling better day-to-day
- Support for yourself 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 in making plans for the future

Who Will Be on My Care Team?

Your care team includes the people who take care of you. They will help teach you about treatments and support you in making decisions about your health. They can also help educate and give support to you and your loved ones. Your care team will usually include a doctor, a nurse, a chaplain, and a social worker.

What Is the Difference Between Palliative Care and Hospice Care?

Hospice is also a special type of care for someone who has a serious health condition. However, hospice care is for a person who is expected to die within the next 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 Palliative Care 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, anger, sadness, or depression
- Less appetite
- Weight loss



There are treatments, medicines, and therapies that can help you feel better. These can include getting relief from:

- Pain. For mild or moderate pain, your doctor may suggest over-the-counter pain medicines like acetaminophen or NSAIDs. 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. Your doctor might also suggest pulmonary rehab, which will help you learn how to breathe better and live well with breathing problems.
- Depression or anxiety. There are medicines that might help you feel better day-to-day. It might also help to talk to the other members of your palliative care team about how you feel. In addition, it might help to receive care from a licensed mental health provider.
- 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 care team about what treatment options are right for you and your symptoms.

Questions for My Doctor

- What is the best way to plan for my future?
- Where can I find support for myself and my loved ones?
- Can we discuss what I want for my future?
- How will I feel as my health condition progresses?
- Whom 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
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MedlinePlus

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

National Institute of Nursing Research

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