

How Do I Know When It's Time For Hospice?

When a loved one is terminally ill, sometimes it's hard to know when to think about hospice care. Is it too early? How much does it cost? Is it worth it? Am I making them feel like I'm giving up?

Hospice care is a wonderful service that can allow your loved one to have a dramatically improved quality of life in their last days, and even to live longer. It can also help family members better cope with the transition so that everyone can make the most of their remaining time together.

Most people have the option to consider hospice care for a terminal illness, but many don't realize it. Hospice offers routine care, acute care and even respite care (when caregivers need a break), so it's best to begin a dialogue early in the process to obtain the most benefit for everyone involved. Our goal as hospice providers is to help you to turn a difficult time into a more fulfilling one for your family.

When Should I Start Thinking About Hospice Care?

Medically eligible patients are entitled to six months of hospice care, so the best time to begin thinking about it is when an end-stage illness is diagnosed. Six months is often adequate for patients with terminal illnesses who have been given a limited life span, however sometimes a disease doesn't follow a normal course and patients live longer than expected.

In this case, hospice care can be extended or even stopped temporarily—so don't avoid talking about it because you fear they will outlive their care. Continuing hospice care beyond six months (or stopping it and then resuming it later) only requires that the patient meet certain medical criteria to continue. For Medicare patients, a hospice medical director or hospice doctor simply needs to recertify that the patient is terminally ill in order for them to continue receiving care.

Who Pays For Hospice?

Hospice care is a benefit that most people are entitled to under Medicare, Medicaid and private insurance. Veterans are also entitled to hospice care benefits under the Veteran's Health Administration. As a not-for-profit hospice, Trustbridge provides care for families without insurance coverage who do not meet the Medicare or Medicaid eligibility requirements, regardless of their ability to pay.

Why Hospice Is Important For Your Loved One

Hospice care is not meant to be end of life care from a purely medical perspective, which is why we encourage you to think about it early in the process. We believe

that hospice care is compassionate and holistic care that transforms the end of a person's life into an emotionally and spiritually fulfilling experience.

The earlier you can begin hospice care, the better the experience can be for the patient and for everyone who loves that person. Patients are afforded a number of important benefits while in hospice including:

- **Expert medical care** from specialists who are trained to provide pain relieve, anxiety relief and symptom control in the last stages of illness
- **Full management of medical supplies** including ordering, delivering and administering all medications at the bedside
- **Special access to non-curative treatments** such as radiation and chemotherapy, when continuing them offers a higher level of comfort (only 4% of hospice organizations nationwide offer this option)
- **Emotional support** from trained counselors who can help with fear and anxiety
- **Spiritual care** from chaplains and rabbis who respect all spiritual traditions and beliefs

Hospice care is customized for each patient and it adjusts as the patient's health changes. This care can also be provided wherever the patient lives, such as in their home or in an assisted-living facility, and is available 24/7 for those patients who need it.

Why Hospice Is Important For Families

Hospice care can lift the work of daily medical and personal care from the shoulders of family members, allowing them to focus instead on moments with their loved ones. Starting it early ensures our families and patients have as many of these moments as possible.

Some of the important services that hospice nurses, assistants and physicians provide to families include:

- Guiding caregivers through important decisions
- Helping the family understand what is happening
- Offering counseling and grief support for both children and adults
- Providing guidance and hands-on training for care
- Mitigating feelings of fear and uncertainty
- Helping family members express their feelings and say goodbye

Our professionals can also offer assistance with more practical matters such as advance directives, living wills and healthcare billing. In short, hospice care means that you are never alone.

At Trustbridge, whether we are caring for you or your loved one in your own home, in a residence of your choice, or as an inpatient in a caregiving facility, our skilled and compassionate professionals are here for you 24-hours a day. Our mission is to help your family find clarity, comfort and peace during this difficult time.

Trustbridge is here to walk the difficult path of grief with you and help you heal. We are committed to becoming your trusted bridge from the shores of grief over the transition of loss, to eventual healing and peace. All of our groups, workshops and family activities are open to everyone in the community who has lost a loved one. We are here to support you. You are not alone.

Have questions? Please visit our [FAQ page](#) or [Contact Us](#).