

What is Hospice?

Definition of Hospice

The word "hospice" comes from the Latin "hospitium" meaning guesthouse. It was originally described a place of shelter for weary and sick travelers returning from religious pilgrimages. During the 1960's, Dr. Cicely Saunders began the modern hospice movement by establishing St. Christopher's Hospice near London. St. Christopher's organized a team approach to professional care giving, and was the first program to use modern pain management techniques to compassionately care for the dying. The first hospice in the United States was established in New Haven, Connecticut in 1974. Today more than 3,000 hospice programs across the country offer comprehensive hospice care. The philosophy of hospice is to provide support for the patient's emotional, social, and spiritual needs as well as medical symptoms as part of treating the whole person.



When should hospice become involved?

Hospice can be discussed with your physician throughout the treatment process and is typically called upon when treatment options are nearing an end. It is always a good idea to discuss hospice early to avoid uncomfortable and stressful decisions at end of life.

How is the process started?

The physician will make the referral and services will usually start within 48 hours, unless it's an urgent need.

What can I expect from hospice?

A team of people including nurses, social worker, home health aide, spiritual care, and volunteers will all help write a plan of care. Hospice staff receives special training in the care of all types of physical and emotional symptoms that cause pain, discomfort and distress. Keeping the patient comfortable and pain-free is an important part of hospice care. Hospice programs have developed ways to measure patient comfort during the course of their stay in hospice. Hospice staff works with the patient's physician to make sure that medication, therapies, and procedures are designed to achieve the goals outlined in the patient's care plan.

Does hospice provide 24 hour care at home?

No, hospice is available 24/7 to answer any questions or to make visit if necessary. Hospice also provides information for families about the end of life and how to care for a dying loved one.

Does hospice do anything to bring death sooner?

No. The goal of hospice is to alleviate suffering and manage symptoms. Hospice does nothing to speed up or slow down the dying process. Their role is to support the patient and family allowing the disease process to take its natural course as comfortable as possible.

Can a hospice patient choose to return to treatment?

Yes, hospice is a choice. A patient can return to curative treatment if they choose and return to hospice later if they choose.

Is the decision for hospice care giving up hope or waiting to die?

No. Hospice is about living. Hospice strives to bring quality of life and comfort to a patient and their family. Hospice provides care and support that is different than all other types of care.

Do most insurances pay for hospice?

Yes. Most insurance do cover hospice services. Check with your specific insurance company for specific information.

