

Hospice Frequently Asked Questions

What is Hospice?

Hospice is a model of health care designed to meet a person's physical, emotional and spiritual needs at the end of life. For those experiencing a life limiting illness and are not receiving curative treatment, hospice can make an improvement in quality of life, ensuring that the person can live as fully and comfortably as possible. Hospice also addresses the family and caregiver needs, providing assistance, emotional and spiritual support.

What is Palliative Care?

Palliative Care seeks to relieve suffering and improve quality of life for patients who have advanced illness, and to assist families in the care of these patients. Highline's Palliative Care program provides aggressive pain and symptom control through an interdisciplinary team in conjunction with all appropriate forms of medical treatment. Services provided include nursing, social work, home health aide, rehabilitation service, chaplain, dietitian, pharmacist, bereavement care, volunteer, and 24 hour on call support. Care is provided in conjunction with the patient's physician. Patients do NOT need to be no-code/DNR status or have a 6 month or less prognosis.

When should a decision be made about entering hospice?

At any time during the course of a life limiting illness, it is appropriate to discuss all of the patient's care options, including hospice care. In general, the earlier hospice can become involved with a patient, the more support we can give to the patient, their family or caregivers. It may be time for hospice when:

- Curative treatment is no longer an option, or is no longer desired.
- The treatment emphasis changes to comfort, pain management, symptom control and quality of life.
- The patient's physician believes hospice can help.
- The patient knows he or she is not going to get well. Many times patients become aware of this before others do.

What is the hospice admissions process?

To be admitted to hospice, the patient's physician must certify that the patient has an estimated life expectancy of six months or less, and the patient has made a decision to seek comfort care only.

Can I receive Hospice services in my home?

Yes, patients can remain at home. One of the benefits of hospice is that we bring care to you in your home, whether it's a private residence, adult family home, assisted living, or a skilled nursing facility. Being in familiar surroundings can be a comfort to both patients and their families.

What if I get better while I'm on hospice care?

Many of our Highline Hospice patients do indeed improve and graduate from Hospice. Our team members will work with you to transition you off from hospice care. Later, if the patient's prognosis changes, he or she can resume hospice care.

Does choosing hospice mean I'm giving up hope?

No. While choosing hospice may involve acknowledging that most diseases can't be cured once they have progressed to an advanced stage, it definitely does not mean giving up hope. Many people receiving hospice care find great hope in enjoying a higher quality of life through pain and symptom management, emotional and spiritual support, and being able to make the most of each day. Our team works with each patient to find out what hope means to him or her, and then helps the patient achieve those goals.

What if I want to discontinue hospice services?

If you prefer to receive care such as aggressive or curative treatment, you can always stop hospice services by signing a form stating you would like to "revoke" your hospice benefit.

Is hospice care covered by insurance?

Hospice care is a covered benefit for all Medicare Part A and Medicaid patients who qualify for care related to your terminal illness. Most commercial insurance plans also have a hospice benefit. Our team will work with your insurance company to coordinate benefits.

Do you provide any help to families after the patient dies?

Highline provides bereavement services for 13 months following the death of a loved one. These services include, grief support groups, short-term individual counseling and community resources.

What are some of the benefits to being on hospice?

- Comfort therapies such as massage, reiki, and music.
- Spiritual care, counseling and respite support.
- Day to day needs, such as ordering medical equipment, providing assistance for bathing, changing the sheets, oral care, skin care and nutrition.
- Medical Social Workers educate and assist with your understanding of Advanced Directives, healthcare decisions and financial needs. The social workers have extensive training in helping families cope with end of life issues and are an advocate for the patient.
- Volunteers are available to read, play cards or other games, listen and provide companionship to the patient.

If you have additional questions please call (206)439-9095.