

## NEED TO KNOW FOR PATIENTS & FAMILIES

# what patients and their families need to know before going into the hospital

## Palliative Care

**Why Is It Important?** Dealing with the symptoms and stress of any painful or serious illness is difficult. Special care is available to make you more comfortable. It's called palliative care. You receive palliative care at the same time that you're receiving treatments for your illness. The purpose of palliative care is to provide an added layer of support to you, your family, and your regular doctors, to help you live as well as possible, and as long as possible. Palliative care helps both the patient and the family with the pain, symptoms and stress of an illness. Studies show that palliative care not only helps people feel better, it also helps them live longer by improving mood, energy, and well being.

### What Can Patients and Caregivers Do?

1. Consider palliative care if you or your loved one suffers from pain, symptoms or stress due to any serious illness.
2. Consider palliative care to help with the side effects of your treatment.
3. Ask for help managing and coordinating your care with all your different doctors.
4. Ask your doctor, or call your local hospital for a palliative care referral.
5. Tell your doctor that palliative care helps people live better and live longer and you would like a referral.
6. Start palliative care early, as soon as you receive diagnosis of a serious illness.
7. Rely on your palliative care team to assist you and your loved ones as you cope with a difficult experience, including the worry, stress, tiredness, anxiety, and sadness caused by your illness.
8. Palliative care is covered by your insurance the same as any other medical service from your doctors.
9. Set goals for your future that lead to a meaningful, enjoyable life while you receive treatment for your illness.

### Take the Quiz: Is Palliative Care Right for You?

Answer these questions to determine whether palliative care might be right for you or your loved one. Remember, you can receive palliative care at any point during your illness.

1. Do you have one or more serious illnesses? Such as:

- Cancer
- Congestive heart failure (CHF)
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema, lung disease
- Kidney failure
- Liver failure
- Neurological diseases (e.g., ALS, Parkinson's)
- Dementia

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

2. Do you have symptoms that make it difficult to be as active as you would like to be, or impact your quality of life? These symptoms might include:

- Pain or discomfort
- Shortness of breath
- Fatigue
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Lack of appetite
- Nausea
- Constipation

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

3. Have you, or someone close to you, experienced the following:

- Difficult side effects from treatment
- Eating problems due to a serious illness
- Frequent emergency room visits
- Three or more admissions to the hospital within 12 months, and with the same symptoms

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

4. Do you, or someone close to you, need help with:

- Knowing what to expect
- Knowing what programs and resources are available
- Making medical decisions about treatment choices/options
- Matching your goals and values to your medical care
- Understanding the pros and cons (benefits/burdens) of treatments (e.g., dialysis, additional cancer treatments, surgery, etc.)

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

5. Do you, or someone close to you, need help with:

- Coping with the stress of a serious illness
- Emotional support
- Spiritual or religious support
- Talking with your family about your illness and what is important to you

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

If you answered yes to more than one of the questions, palliative care is something you or your loved one may need. If you feel you may benefit from palliative care, please talk to your healthcare provider today.

**If you want to find a hospital in your area that offers a palliative care program, go to the Palliative Care Provider Directory of Hospitals at [www.getpalliativecare.org](http://www.getpalliativecare.org) to search by state and city.**

**Why NICHE?** NICHE Hospitals are committed to making the hospital stay as safe and positive as possible for older adults.

**Choose a NICHE hospital to make sure you or your family member gets the best care. NICHE has over 450 hospitals and healthcare facilities throughout North America. Go to [nicheprogram.org](http://nicheprogram.org) to find a NICHE hospital near you.**