

PALLIATIVE CARE

What is palliative care?

Palliative care, also known as supportive care or symptom management, helps people with serious or life-threatening illnesses feel better. It focuses on improving quality of life by managing symptoms and side effects of the illness or its treatments as early as possible. This care also includes emotional, social, and spiritual support for both patients and their families.

Who gives palliative care?

Palliative care is provided by a team of specially trained health professionals, which may include doctors, nurses, social workers, dietitians, chaplains, and therapists. This team works together with your regular cancer doctors, not as a replacement for them, to provide extra support. A palliative care team may include social workers, pharmacists, registered dietitians, chaplains, NPs, physician assistants, and therapists.

When is palliative care used in cancer care?

Palliative care can start from the time of diagnosis and continue throughout treatment, and even at the end of life if needed. It helps people manage symptoms and keep up a good quality of life at every stage of cancer care.

Where is palliative care received?

Palliative care can be provided in many places, such as cancer centers, clinics, hospitals, or even at home.

Is palliative care the same as hospice?

No, palliative care and hospice are not the same. Palliative care can begin at any stage of the disease and can be given alongside cancer treatments. Hospice care, on the other hand, focuses on comfort care when cancer treatments are no longer working to control the disease. While all hospice care is palliative, palliative care can start earlier and is not limited to end-of-life care.

ASK YOUR HEALTHCARE TEAM

- *Does your hospital have a palliative care service?*
- *How can I see a palliative care specialist?*
- *Will you and my palliative care team work together to manage my symptoms?*
- *Who can I contact if I have questions about my palliative care?*

TERMS TO KNOW

- **Chemotherapy:** A type of cancer treatment that uses strong medicine to kill cancer cells.
- **Hospice:** Care for people with a serious illness who are near the end of life, focusing on pain relief and emotional support for both the patient and family. Hospice care can be given at home or in a care facility.
- **Palliative care:** Specialized medical care for people with serious illnesses. It focuses on easing symptoms and reducing stress to improve the quality of life for patients and their families.



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WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: All patients are unique and have specific needs. The following list provides examples and is not exhaustive.

PHYSICAL

- **Pain or other complications** from cancer, treatments, or surgery
- **Nausea/vomiting** during and after chemotherapy or other treatments
- **Fatigue** during BCG treatments, radiation, chemotherapy, or immunotherapy
- **Sexual problems** caused by surgery or other treatments
- **Nutritional status** before, during, and after cancer treatments or surgery

EMOTIONAL

- **Support for depression, anxiety, or fear** for patients and their families
- **Sadness** about body changes, especially after surgery or urinary diversion
- **Talking to children** and other loved ones about cancer

SPIRITUAL

Spiritual care based on the patient's or family's values, beliefs, and cultural background.

OTHER

Questions about legal forms such as advanced directives and healthcare power of attorney

MYTHS ABOUT PALLIATIVE CARE

- **If I get palliative care, that means I can't have any more cancer treatment: FALSE.** Palliative care can be used along with cancer treatments to improve your quality of life.
- **I don't have pain, so I can't get palliative care: FALSE.** Palliative care is not just for pain. It can help with nausea, vomiting, fatigue, loss of appetite, sleep problems, depression, anxiety, and more.

- **I didn't get chemotherapy for my bladder cancer, so I can't get palliative care: FALSE.** Even if you didn't have chemotherapy, palliative care can help with symptoms like bladder issues after treatments like BCG or radiation, or pain after surgery.

NEXT STEPS

- It can be helpful to talk to someone who has experienced palliative care. Call the BCAN Survivor to Survivor program to connect with a volunteer who knows about having palliative care at 888-901-BCAN.
- For more information, please visit [BCAN.org/palliative-care](https://www.bcan.org/palliative-care)

The Bladder Cancer Advocacy Network (BCAN)

BCAN's mission is to increase public awareness about bladder cancer, advance bladder cancer research, and provide educational and support services for the bladder cancer community.



888-901-BCAN (2226)



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