

# Guide to Hospice Care

As you or a loved one faces an advanced illness, you can count on the VNS Health Hospice Care team for help and support. From pain and symptom management, to time with family and friends, to emotional support and spiritual care, we're here for you.

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## What Is Hospice Care?

Sometimes a person's illness may not be curable, or they may decide not to receive any more treatment. Although this decision might feel isolating, you and your loved ones don't have to go through this alone.

Hospice care is a special kind of care focused on comfort and quality of life in a person's last months of life, and it is often provided where that person lives – in their own home or in a nursing facility.

Hospice care includes medical care related to the person's illness, as well as emotional support, spiritual care, practical help, and personal care. Hospice care also supports caregivers and family members through their loved one's illness and beyond.

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## When Is It Time for Hospice Care?

You and your loved one might have a lot of different feelings about starting hospice care. Maybe it's hard for both you and your loved one to accept what starting hospice care means. You might feel like going on hospice is giving up. These feelings are all valid, and it's important to remember that you're not

alone in feeling them.

*By starting hospice care, you're not admitting defeat. What you're really saying is, "I love my loved one. I care deeply about them and want whatever time they have left to be comfortable, letting them live out their life somewhere familiar and surrounded by the people they love."*

Although people may be uncomfortable talking about hospice care, most people and their families benefit from it. It can provide comfort and peace to your loved one while also relieving some of your caregiving load – allowing you to spend more quality time with them. Family members and caregivers often say that the support they received from hospice reduced feelings of guilt and worry. In fact, many people say they wish they'd started hospice care sooner.

It might be the right time to consider hospice if:

- You want your loved one to get relief from pain or other symptoms in the comfort of their own home or other familiar surroundings.
- Your loved one has been spending more time in the hospital or going to the emergency room more often.
- You are worried that your loved one will die in the hospital without loved ones nearby or that they will receive unwanted aggressive treatment.
- Your loved one has an illness such as heart failure, COPD, end-stage kidney disease, dementia, or cancer that is considered terminal.

Starting hospice care as early as possible can reduce your loved one's pain and other symptoms. It can help them breathe easier and feel less tired.

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# Common Myths About Hospice Care

Many people have a lot of anxiety about death or dying. Misinformation can keep you and your family from knowing what resources and care are available to you.

Our goal at VNS Health is for everyone to have everything they need to make an informed decision about hospice.

## What to Expect During Your First Visit

The main goal of hospice care is to ensure that your or your loved one's last months are as comfortable and meaningful as possible. Hospice care respects your wishes, so home hospice services are based on each individual and family's goals.

VNS Health hospice services include not only medical care and support but also personal and emotional support as well.

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## Paying for Hospice Care

Hospice care is covered by Medicare, Medicaid, the Veterans Administration, and most private insurance companies. Learn more about paying for home hospice care.