

# Carlos's Story

## From 65 Days in the Hospital to Hospice Care at Home

After battling COVID-19 and several chronic illnesses for 65 days in two different hospitals, Carlos\* didn't want to spend the remainder of his life in the hospital. VNS Health's home hospice care allowed him to return to the home he loved.



"Are you the lady that's going to help me get home?" That was the first thing that Carlos said to his hospice nurse when they met at Harlem Hospital. The nurse, a member of the VNS Health Hospice Care team, says that this was what "broke the ice," and she did indeed help Carlos get home.

## Carlos's Return Home

While Carlos was still in the hospital, his hospice nurse helped him and his family prepare for his care at home.

The nurse arranged for the medical equipment, including a hospital bed, and the interdisciplinary care that Carlos would

need at home. And she educated his wife, Iris, about what to expect during the course of his illness. “He had breathing issues and hadn’t been home in weeks, so it’s scary,” said the nurse, who also helped the family navigate [advance directives](#). “We’re here to educate, to show them what to do, explain every step. I told Iris she could call any time, and she felt much better.”

Iris did call, frequently. “I was scared,” she said. “VNS Health’s support gave me comfort and hope that I was going to get the help I needed.” Carlos’s care team – which included a nurse, doctor, social worker, and spiritual care counselor – helped the family manage his symptoms and navigate the emotional, social, and logistical complexities of end-of-life care.

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*– Iris, wife of Carlos, a VNS Health Hospice Care patient*

## Why Receive Hospice Care at Home?

Carlos and Iris are not alone in their experience. Receiving hospice care at home allows people at the end of life to remain as comfortable as possible in the place they love. Their family and friends can visit at any time, unrestricted by hospital visitation policies.

As Carlos and Iris quickly discovered, home hospice includes many different types of care, such as:

- Medical care, including management of symptoms, equipment, and medicines
- Emotional support
- Spiritual care
- Personal care, like help with eating and bathing
- Help with practical matters, like preparing meals

Home hospice care also supports family members and caregivers, providing everything from education about their loved one's condition to emotional support to round-the-clock access to a hospice nurse through the VNS Health caregiver helpline.

## What Being Home Means to Carlos

Carlos is a beloved member of his Brooklyn community. Iris describes him as the kind of neighbor who, after sweeping the sidewalk in front of their house, would then sweep the entire block. "People would come out and say hello," says Iris. "Whoever needs help, they can count on him."

The people of his community mean just as much to Carlos as he does to them. He is delighted to be back at home surrounded by his friends and family, who visit often. "Everybody feels in a better place at their own home," says Iris.

*\*Patient and family names have been changed to protect privacy.*