

## Palliative care explained

Palliative care recognises the special needs of a person with a life threatening illness. The focus is not on curing them but on treating their symptoms by making them comfortable, controlling their pain and helping them to make changes that will make their life easier. Palliative care aims to make the person feel in control of their treatment and their quality of life.

Palliative care involves family and friends, who also need to be prepared for the death of someone they love. Palliative care workers also offer help and support during the grieving process.

Palliative care can be provided in the person's own home, at a specialist inpatient hospice unit, or at another health facility, depending on where the person lives and where they choose to die. It complements the range of medical treatments and services already available.

### How palliative care helps

Palliative care offers a range of services to the person and their family. This includes:

- Nursing
- Consultancy to the person's doctor
- Day care
- Diet advice
- Loan of equipment
- Physiotherapy
- Occupational therapy.

It also includes:

- Counselling
- Social worker services
- Spiritual support
- Pastoral care
- Bereavement support
- Wide-ranging support from trained volunteers.

### Referrals to palliative care

You can be referred by anyone who is caring for you - including health professionals, your family and friends - or you can refer yourself. Simply contact your local service.

### Palliative care is for cancer and non-cancer illnesses

Palliative care is available for all people facing a life threatening illness. Palliative care services are committed to caring for everyone, regardless of their race, culture, background, religion or belief system.

### Pain can be managed

In almost all cases, pain can be overcome or made quite tolerable. In all cases, it can be eased to some degree. It is important to realise that, although pain occurs in many life threatening illnesses, not everyone will experience it. It is very important to be able to speak openly about pain and discomfort and to ask your doctor or nurse any questions on your mind.

### Cost

Palliative care is generally free. There may be charges for the hire of some specialised equipment, medications, dressings and treatments.

### Questions about your illness

There are many questions you may like answered. For instance, some people want to know what will happen to them and their bodies as their illness progresses. Answers to these sorts of questions are very personal. The supportive staff of a palliative care service will help you with these or any other queries you may have.

### **Where to get help**

- Your doctor.
- Palliative Care Victoria Tel. (03) 9662 9644

### **Things to remember**

- Palliative care helps people with a life threatening illness.
- Palliative care supports the person and their family.
- Pain can be managed.

**This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:**

Palliative Care Victoria

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