

Palliative care - help for the terminally ill

Palliative care helps people with a terminal illness to enjoy life as much as their illness will let them. It is for anyone who is terminally ill and their family and friends. Palliative care can be offered at home, in hospital or at a hospice.

Palliative care provides support and comfort

Palliative care aims to:

- Look after the physical needs of the patient.
- Reduce or prevent pain and other symptoms of the patient's illness.
- Provide counselling and emotional support for the person who is ill.
- Provide grief and bereavement counselling for family and friends while the person is sick.
- Offer follow-up counselling after their death.

Who provides palliative care

Palliative care is provided by a team which can include:

- Doctors
- Nurses
- Counsellors
- Volunteers.

Where to find palliative care services

Palliative care can be given at home, in a hospital or at a hospice. A hospice is where specially trained staff care for terminally ill people in a place more like a home than a hospital. As far as possible, the person and their family and friends choose where the care is given.

Some patients receive all their palliative care in a hospice or in hospital (in a hospice ward or unit). Other patients are only admitted to a hospital or hospice for a brief stay. This service offers:

- Relief from pain and other upsetting symptoms.
- A short break (respite) for family or friends who are caring for the patient at home.

There are special programs to help patients who want to be looked after at home. They are known as community-based programs and they provide:

- Medical support
- Nursing care (usually available 24 hours a day)
- Equipment loan
- Counselling and bereavement services.

Who refers patients for palliative care

Patients are referred by:

- Doctors, nurses or other health services
- The patients themselves, or their families or friends
- Community services, such as home help.

After the referral is made, a hospice and palliative care worker visits the sick person in their home. The worker will help the patient - and the family and friends caring for them - decide which services they need.

Palliative care is available to everyone

Palliative care is available to any person who has a terminal illness. It is also available to family members.

Where to get help

- Your local palliative care service
- Your doctor
- Your local community health centre
- Palliative Care Victoria (03) 9662 9644.

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

Department of Health - Aged Care

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