
Accessing a palliative care service

Summary

- If you have been diagnosed with a life-limiting illness, talk with your doctor or health professional about your palliative care options.
 - There are several types of palliative care service options available.
 - Talk with your family and your doctor about which type of end of life or palliative care service you need now and in the future.
 - There are options for getting a referral to palliative care.
 - You can find palliative care services using online directories.
 - More information is available from Palliative Care Victoria and Palliative Care Australia.
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Accessing a palliative care service

If you have been diagnosed with a serious or chronic life-limiting illness, you may want to talk to your doctor or other health professional about how palliative care services may assist you.

Depending on your situation and your own preferences and needs, you may want to consider palliative care at the time of your diagnosis or you may want to wait. Accessing palliative care services earlier is often better, even if you don't use all their services until later on. Early access ensures you hear about the benefits that palliative care can offer you. Research has shown that people who access palliative care earlier have improved outcomes in their care.

You can make your day-to-day life and the lives of people caring for you much easier by accessing palliative care services, whether it be at home, in an inpatient palliative care unit, in a residential aged care home, disability supported accommodation or hospital.

Palliative care service types

Palliative care is designed to meet your needs and the needs of your family. You may choose how and where the care is provided, depending what is available in your local area.

The following types of specialist palliative care services are available in Victoria:

- **community palliative care** – provides palliative care nursing, allied health, respite and practical support, as well as information, equipment, medications, complex symptom and pain management, and access to medical review and assessment in peoples' homes
- **inpatient palliative care** – provides care to people who require complex symptom and pain management or end of life care in a specialist unit attached to a hospital. Some units provide day care
- **hospital** – provides consultancy to people who require symptom and pain management or end of life care within hospitals alongside other care
- **outpatient clinics** – provide assessment, care planning and interventions early after a person has been diagnosed with a life-limiting illness
- **day hospices** – provide psychological and emotional support for people with a life-limiting illness, and respite for their family and carers.

Choosing the best type of palliative care for you

Talk with your family and your doctor or health professional about which type of end of life or palliative care service you need now and in the future. Your needs will probably change as your condition progresses and palliative care

services are designed to meet your changing needs.

It is also a good idea to ask your family or carer about what kind of help they need. It can be useful to write down a list of all the things that you and your carer are struggling with, and then talk to your doctor about the palliative care options that are available to you.

You can also contact palliative care services directly and talk with them about the services they offer.

Getting a referral for palliative care services

You can contact palliative care services directly or you can be referred by your doctor, nurse or local health providers, your carer or a family member. Start by talking to your doctor or trusted professional from a local agency or clinic about what your needs are.

Community palliative care services in Victoria accept referrals based on a person's place of residence. They provide services to particular areas.

If you require admission to a specialist palliative care unit in a hospital, you will need to obtain a referral from your doctor.

Finding palliative care services

You can find a palliative care service in Victoria by using:

- the 'Find a health service' search option on the **Better Health Channel** website
- the **Palliative Care Victoria** search directory
- the **National Palliative Care Service** online directory.

Where to get help

- **Palliative Care Victoria** Tel. (03) 9662 9644
- **Palliative Care Australia** Tel. (02) 6232 0700
- **CareSearch** – Palliative Care Knowledge Network Tel. (08) 7221 8233

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

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