

CARE FOR ADVANCED CANCER

Cancer is a disease that occurs when abnormal cells divide without control and damage other parts of the body. There are more than 100 types of cancers.



If cancer returns or recurs, it may be in an advanced stage and can have an even more serious impact on your health. You may have different goals for care when dealing with advanced cancer, and these goals may change over time. Rather than a cure or remission, your goal may be to control the growth of the cancer and improve your quality of life through palliative care.

About Palliative Care

Palliative care (pronounced pal-lee-uh-tiv) is specialized medical care for people with serious illness. It focuses on providing relief from the symptoms and stress of cancer and its treatment, and aims to improve quality of life for the patient and the family. Palliative care is provided by a specially-trained team of doctors, nurses, and specialists who work together to provide an extra layer of support. It is appropriate at any age and at any stage of an illness, and it can be provided along with curative treatment.

People can have palliative care in addition to treatments. It can make treatment more successful by controlling symptoms and side effects, and by supporting the patient and family. A palliative care team can help families deal with treatments or prepare for the changes that may occur, if the cancer cannot be controlled. Research shows that palliative care may help you and your family's health and well-being. "Family" can be relatives and those we choose to call family.

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About Hospice Care

Hospice care is a type of care that can be provided when cancer treatments are no longer controlling the disease. Hospice doctors, nurses, spiritual leaders, social workers, and volunteers have special training to support people and their families through their physical and emotional journeys at the end of life. Hospice helps you live each day to the fullest by helping you be comfortable. Research has shown that people and families who use hospice services report a higher quality of life than those who don't.

People often choose hospice care very late in the course of illness. This delays their ability to receive the comfort and dignity offered by hospice workers. Medicare, Medicaid, private health insurers, and

the Veterans Health Administration generally allow people to choose hospice care if a person is expected to die in six months or less. Many who have lost family members wish they had asked for hospice sooner.

For the Family

If you are taking care of someone with cancer, you need to take care of your own health as well. You may be more affected by your loved one's health problems than you realize. You may have physical and emotional fatigue, stress, depression, and anxiety. If you take care of your own body, mind, and spirit, you may have more energy.



Resources

Planning for Advanced Cancer

National Cancer Institute at the National Institutes of Health

<https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/advanced-cancer/planning>

Coping with Advanced Cancer

National Cancer Institute at the National Institutes of Health

Covers major topics people should consider when they have advanced cancer

<https://www.cancer.gov/publications/patient-education/advanced-cancer>

Advanced Care and Caregivers

National Cancer Institute at the National Institutes of Health

Covers issues caregivers should consider when their family members have advanced cancer

<https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/advanced-cancer/caregivers>

Give Peace of Mind: Advance Care Planning Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

More information and helpful links about advance care planning

<http://www.cdc.gov/aging/advancecareplanning>

Additional Resources for Veterans and their Caregivers:

VA Caregiver Support Website

<http://www.caregiver.va.gov>

VA's Caregiver Support Line

1-855-260-3274

VA Geriatrics and Extended Care

http://www.va.gov/GERIATRICS/Guide/LongTermCare/Home_and_Community_Based_Services.asp