

What is Hospice?

A special kind of care for dying people, their families and their caregivers that;

- Treats the physical needs of patients and their emotional and spiritual needs
- Takes place in the patient's home, or in a home-like setting
- Concentrates on making patients as free of pain and as comfortable as they want to be so they can make the most of the time that remains to them
- Considers helping family members an essential part of its mission
- Believes the quality of life to be as important as the length of life

Who uses hospice?

More than a million patients and their families have utilized the services of hospice (pronounced "HOS-pis").

Some 60 percent of all hospice patients have cancer, and many of the rest have either heart disease or AIDS. However, regardless of a patient's condition – or age – hospices open their doors and their hearts to all terminally ill persons.

Many surviving family members say, "I do not know what I would have done without hospice." And many credit it with helping to make their final days with their loved ones warm and memorable.

What services does a hospice provide?

No job is too big or too small for the hospice team – it helps in every way it can.

Hospice services may include:

- Pain relief through medication
- Back rubs and foot massages
- Matters of personal cleanliness and coordination of necessary medical equipment
- "Being there" – to let the patient know he or she is not alone
- Talking openly about feelings assisting with household chores and helping to put financial matters in order
- Providing favorite foods or music

- Joining in favorite pastimes

Though hospice professionals and volunteers are there to help, they encourage patients to be as active and to do as much for themselves as possible.

What hospice services does Medicare cover?

When a Medicare-eligible patient receives services from a Medicare-approved hospice, Medicare pays almost the entire cost.

In general, coverage includes:

- Physician services
- Nursing care
- Medical appliances and supplies as appropriate
- Drugs for symptom management and pain relief
- Short-term inpatient and respite care
- Homemaker services and home health aid
- Physical and other therapies
- Counseling