

FACING END OF LIFE CARE OPTIONS

CAREGIVERS



End of Life Care and Hospice Care

Understanding Options for End of Life Care

It is important for seniors and their caregivers to understand end of life care options, like hospice or palliative choices.

Sometimes life ends unexpectedly. But for many seniors, the end of life comes with warnings signs and happens slowly. Although difficult to discuss, it is important for seniors and their caregivers to understand all of their options.

What End of Life Care is All About

WHAT MAKES END OF LIFE CARE UNIQUE?

End of life care is unique because it is specifically for people who are nearing the end of a terminal disease or condition. The goal of end of life care is not rehabilitation or to cure an illness, but to support individuals as they wish until they pass away.

WHAT LEADS UP TO END OF LIFE CARE?

A number of diseases and conditions can lead to end of life care. Patients with terminal cancer diagnoses may begin end of life care when they decide to stop seeking treatment for the cancer, for example. Chronic illnesses, organ failure, and neurological diseases are other examples of conditions that may lead to end of life care.

WHEN IS IT TIME FOR END OF LIFE CARE TO BEGIN?

Medical professionals will often consult with patients and their caregivers when they believe end of life care is warranted. For hospice care, patients generally must be considered to be within 6 months of death.

WHO PROVIDES END OF LIFE CARE?

Teams of medical professionals and caregivers often work together to provide end of life care. Hospice care is often performed by a team in a facility or in the home. Palliative care is usually provided in a hospital or medical facility.

([Caregivers Library](#))

Main Types of End of Life Care

- 1. Hospice**
Either home or facility-based, hospice may or may not be covered by an insurance policy. Some aspects of the service may not be covered. Hospice begins within 6 months of the expected end of life.
- 2. Palliative**
Facility-based, palliative care focuses on comfort instead of treatment. It is usually included with insurance. Palliative care can be provided at any time during a chronic or terminal disease.

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Weighing End of Life Care Options

There are many factors to consider regarding end of life care. Seniors and their loved ones should make decisions based on questions like:

- Is life-prolonging treatment desired during end of life care?
- Will care be sought on a specific timeline or in an ongoing capacity? (Hospice begins within 6 months of death)
- Will the care be provided at home or in a facility?
- Does insurance need to cover all of the costs?
- What types of care and service does my insurance provider cover?
- Is round the clock care needed?
- What kinds of providers are desired for end of life care (counselors, nurses, caregivers)?
- Will access to specialized technology and equipment be a factor?

(NHPCO)



Tips for Discussing End of Life Care

- Determine what term for end of life is acceptable
- Talk about preferences before needs
- Make a list of "do nots" to abide by
- Take breaks to avoid growing overwhelmed
- Consult the insurance company ahead of time to learn about options
- Include everyone who will be involved in end of life decisions if a senior becomes unable to speak for themselves

([The Conversation Project](#))



Home Care Tip

Plan for seniors to enjoy their favorite activities or treats on days when end of life care will be discussed. Staying positive is important for a senior's health and decision-making, especially during difficult conversations.