

Providing evidence-based information about palliative care for everyone because death and dying will affect all of us.

What is palliative care?

Palliative care is person-centred care and support for people with a life-limiting illness. This includes support for their family and carers. The aim is to help people live their life comfortably and as fully as possible by supporting their physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs.

Examples of the care required might include:

- Relief from distressing symptoms including:
 - > Pain
 - > Depression
 - > Fatigue (tiredness)
 - > Nausea
 - > Breathlessness (dyspnoea)
 - > Anxiety
- Psychological and spiritual support
- A support system to help patients and family live as actively as possible until death
- Support to help the family cope during the person's illness and in their own bereavement.



Palliative care enhances quality of life. It intends neither to hasten or postpone death.

Who is palliative care for?

Palliative care is for people of any age with a life-limiting illness and their families. A life-limiting illness is one likely to cause death in the foreseeable future. This includes:

- Cancer
- Neurological disease
- Dementia
- Advanced kidney, heart, liver, and lung disease

Family can include partners, relatives, friends, or anyone who is considered so by the patient (including pets).

When is it provided?

Palliative care can be provided at any time depending on a person's needs. It is now accepted that combining palliative care with active treatment improves symptom control, quality of life, and family satisfaction.

When you receive palliative care is a decision for you and your family.

Who provides palliative care?

Palliative care can be provided by many different health and care professionals.

In a hospital setting care is provided by doctors, palliative specialists, nurses, and allied health professionals.

In the community the palliative care team might include the person's GP, community and aged care nurses, visiting allied health professionals, careworkers, and support workers. Family, friends, neighbours, and acquaintances will also provide important support.

Where is it provided?

Palliative care may be provided in hospitals or the community setting. This includes:

- Private homes
- Residential aged care
- Accommodation for people experiencing mental illness
- Accommodation for people living with a disability
- Correctional facilities
- General practices
- Community palliative care clinics and day centres
- Hospitals

Not all people with a life limiting illness need specialist palliative care. Many people can be cared for at home and see specialist palliative care staff only when there is a need.

Being able to stay at home with a serious illness usually requires the help of family members or friends. Older people may be receiving palliative care alongside a homecare package or within a residential aged care facility.

Some may have more complex needs and symptoms that need careful management. In this case there may be the continuing involvement of a specialist team and short or longer stays in a hospice or palliative care ward.