



## When Is It Time To Call Hospice

At some point in the journey, the focus may have to shift from battling a disease to comfort care and enhancing the quality of life during the final weeks or months. Some people feel that calling hospice is “giving up” or that hope is gone. It can be difficult to know how to walk the line between maintaining hope and being realistic. Many people miss out on the benefits of hospice care because they are hesitant to make that call. One comment heard time and time again from hospice families is “I wish I had known sooner”. Read over the following information and see if any apply to you or your loved one.

- You have been told that the treatment is no longer working
- You have decided to no longer aggressively treat the disease
- The doctor has said your condition is “terminal”, meaning the life expectancy is probably less than 6 months
- You have been hospitalized or gone to the emergency room several times in the last 6 months
- You are no longer able to go to the doctor’s office or getting there is extremely difficult and painful.
- Help is needed for bathing, dressing, getting out of bed or walking
- You are having difficulty managing your pain and other symptoms
- You are not able to afford medical equipment and supplies
- Your caregiver needs help
- You want to live your remaining days to the fullest and make your own decisions
- You want to remain in your own home
- You need an inpatient facility
- You and/or your family need help taking care of unfinished business
- You and/or your family need emotional or spiritual care or counseling

Hospice emphasizes palliative rather than curative treatment, choosing quality rather than quantity of life. Support is offered through a personalized plan of care to ease the many different types of pain facing patients and families during such a difficult period of time.

The hospice team provides

- Nurses who make home visits and are on call 24/7
- Aides assist with personal hygiene and light housekeeping

- Social workers support the family in planning, problem resolution and emotional support
- Trained volunteers provide emotional support, take care of errands, and allow caregivers some much needed time for themselves.
- Spiritual support is available by chaplains
- Inpatient Medical director as well as a physician available for in home visits (not true for all hospices)
- All disease related medicines are provided at no cost
- Oxygen is provided as well as other medical supplies
- Medical equipment such as hospital beds, wheelchair, bedside commode
- Education for the family
- Help with managing pain and other symptoms
- Bereavement counselor provides family grief counseling