



# A Guide to Hospice

When a person has a serious advanced illness and it seems likely that they could die in the next 6 months it is important to consider **Hospice Care**.



Hospice provides emotional, physical, and spiritual support for people with a serious illness who want to focus on comfort.



Hospice includes a team of doctors, nurses, social workers, chaplains and therapists. These providers can visit you at home or in a hospice home to make sure that you are comfortable.



Hospice focuses on your comfort. Hospice provides medicines, equipment and some housework at home. It also provides support for your family and loved ones. Hospice can also provide spiritual support.

If you choose hospice, you want to focus on comfort. If you want treatments to try to cure your disease, then hospice may not be right for you.

It's important to know that hospice is not a permanent decision. You can change your mind. You can still see your regular doctors if you would like.

## Think About Your Choices

There is a lot to think about before choosing hospice.



### Hospice Care

Many people who choose hospice care feel it is important to focus on quality of life and comfort.



### Non-Hospice Care

Many people who do not choose hospice care want to pursue more procedures with the hope of cure or extending life even at the risk of more pain and suffering.



## Some Additional Thoughts

You may have beliefs that affect how you think about hospice care. Many people worry about how their choice will affect their friends and family. Have you talked with them? It is very important to talk with your friends, family, and health providers about your wishes. Talking about your wishes will help protect your rights and values.

## Studies about options for people who are thinking about hospice:

- Temel JS, Greer JA, Muzikansky A, Gallagher ER, Admane S, Jackson VA, Dahlin CM, Blinderman CD, Jacobsen J, Pirl WF, Billings JA, Lynch TJ. Early palliative care for patients with metastatic non-small-cell lung cancer. *N Engl J Med*. 2010 Aug 19;363(8):733-42. doi: 10.1056/NEJMoa1000678..
- Connor SR, Pyenson B, Fitch K, Spence C, Iwasaki K. Comparing hospice and nonhospice patient survival among patients who die within a three-year window. *J Pain Symptom Manage*. 2007 Mar;33(3):238-46.
- National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization. <https://www.nhpco.org/about/hospice-care>
- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. <https://www.ahrq.gov/professionals/quality-patient-safety/talkingquality/create/longtermcare/hospice/index.html>
- Medicare. <https://www.medicare.gov/what-medicare-covers/part-a/how-hospice-works.html>

## Information About This Decision Aid

**This Hospice guide was developed by Angelo Volandes MD, MPH who is a physician and researcher at Harvard Medical School.**

This hospice guide was developed by Angelo Volandes MD, MPH who is a physician and researcher at Harvard Medical School. Dr. Volandes is recognized worldwide as an expert on educating patients about their choices for hospice. Dr. Volandes was not paid by any outside groups to develop this fact sheet which was last updated in 2017. Subsequent iterations have been funded by the Stupski Foundation, ACP Decisions, and the Melik-Baschkopf Foundation. Dr. Volandes and these non-profit organizations do not make money from choices people make about hospice.