
Palliative Care: Support at any time during a serious illness



Palliative care is an added layer of support to help you and your loved ones live with a serious illness.

With palliative care, you can get physical, emotional, and spiritual support.

You can get help to relieve pain, fatigue, anxiety, shortness of breath, nausea, and depression. This helps you learn what to expect from your illness and decide on a treatment plan. Sometimes your doctor can provide palliative support. Other times a trained palliative care team works with you and your doctor to provide specialist care and the services you need.

Palliative care can help you at any stage of a serious illness.

Examples include congestive heart failure, kidney disease, multiple sclerosis, and cancer. Doctors often wait too long or they simply don't refer patients for added palliative care supports. Many patients who are seriously ill miss out on the benefits of palliative care.

Palliative care is a big help when you are seriously ill. Here's why:

Palliative care improves your quality of life and may help you live longer.

In a study of people with advanced cancer, those who got palliative care early reported



better control of pain and other symptoms. People who got palliative care had a better quality of life and less depression. They also lived longer and spent less time in the hospital than those receiving only standard treatments.

Studies suggest that there are similar benefits for people with other serious illnesses.

Palliative care is not “end-of-life” care or hospice.

Palliative care can be useful no matter how long you are expected to live. You don't have to give up other treatments for your illness.

Start palliative care early for best results.

Palliative care is most helpful if you start it early during a serious illness. You should request it, no need to wait for your doctor to bring it up. It will affect your quality of care and treatment decisions.

For more information and support on palliative and end-of-life care, loss and grief, visit: www.virtualhospice.ca.

About Choosing Wisely Canada

Choosing Wisely Canada is the national voice for reducing unnecessary tests and treatments in health care. One of its important functions is to help clinicians and patients engage in conversations that lead to smart and effective care choices.

How this pamphlet was created:

This pamphlet was adapted with permission from a similar pamphlet used in the US Choosing Wisely campaign, organized by the ABIM Foundation. Modifications were made to ensure relevance for a Canadian audience. Canadian reviewers of this pamphlet included the Canadian Society of Palliative Care Physicians.

This pamphlet is for you to use when talking with your health care provider. It is not a substitute for medical advice and treatment. Use of this pamphlet is at your own risk.

Plan ahead! Don't wait until you are sick to start advance care planning conversations

Advance care planning helps you think about, talk about and document wishes for health care in the event that you become incapable of consenting to or refusing medical treatments or other care.

Choose a loved one, family member or friend to communicate your wishes for you, should you become too unwell to make decisions for yourself. Talking to that person as well as your doctor and the rest of your family will help ensure your wishes are known and will help your loved ones make treatment decisions on your behalf.

Put your plans in writing.

Some people and their doctors put off talking about their wishes and values for health care. This puts you at risk of being too ill to guide your doctors and may increase the uncertainty and burden that your loved ones feel.

Start today with information from the Speak Up Campaign:

- www.advancecareplanning.ca

Check out the resources in your province/territory.