Improving Quality of Life Through Palliative Care

Treating the Person as well as the Disease

Is palliative care right for you?

Palliative care may be right for you or a loved one if you are having symptoms or side effects that interfere with your quality of life. These might include pain, shortness of breath, fatigue, depression, loss of appetite, or nausea.

Who provides palliative care?

Your oncology doctors and nurses may provide palliative care as part of your cancer treatment to help reduce your symptoms or side effects. They may also ask for help from a palliative care provider or team to work with them and provide expert symptom management, extra time for communication, help with advanced care planning, and help in navigating the health system.

The palliative care team may include specially trained doctors, nurses, chaplains/spiritual counselors, and social workers. Pharmacists, nutritionists, massage therapists, and others might also be part of the team. Many hospitals and cancer centers have these specialized teams available for consultation as part of the comprehensive cancer care services they provide.

Where is palliative care provided?

Palliative care is provided in a variety of settings – including hospitals and community cancer centers – where patients and survivors frequently receive cancer care. Palliative care may also be available in long-term care facilities, through hospice, and even in the home.

How can you get palliative care?

Ask for it! Tell your doctor, nurse, family, and caregivers that you're interested in having palliative care along with your cancer treatment to help address symptoms and other concerns for yourself or your loved one. Most insurance plans, including Medicare and Medicaid, cover palliative care services. If costs are a concern, a social worker or other member of the palliative care team can help you.

## Where can you find more information?

If you have questions about palliative care, call your American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

You can visit **cancer.org** and **getpalliativecare. org** for further information.

Visit **prepareforyourcare.org** for an online tool that helps prepare you for talking with your doctors about your quality of life and decision making.

Will palliative care be available when you need it?

Palliative care is a growing specialty, but these services are not always available to those who need them. The American Cancer Society's advocacy affiliate, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN), is working to improve access to palliative care for all people facing cancer and other serious illnesses. ACS CAN supports proposals to fund research and training that will help broaden delivery of quality palliative care to all care settings, while also increasing the number of specialized palliative care-trained doctors, nurses, and other health professionals. Visit **acscan.org/ qualityoflife** for more information.
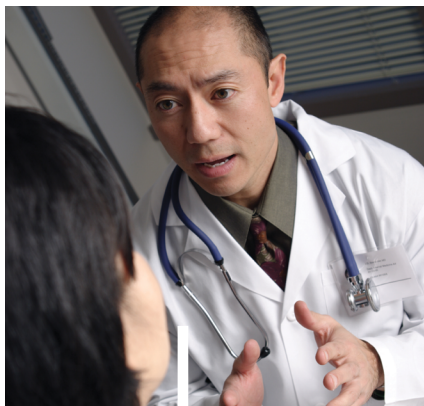
What is palliative care?

Palliative care, also called supportive care, can improve the quality of life for cancer patients and their families by focusing on relieving the pain, stress, and other symptoms of cancer and its treatment.

Palliative care can be given at any age and any stage of disease. It can be provided from the time of diagnosis and continue along with curative treatment. Palliative care uses a team approach to bring together your cancer doctor with other doctors and nurses who specialize in treating symptoms. They consider what's most important to you and help you make decisions about your care that are right for you.

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The American Cancer Society's nonprofit,
nonpartisan advocacy affiliate, the American
Cancer Society Cancer Action Network℠ (ACS
CAN), is working to make certain that palliative
care is available to all people with cancer and their
families. For more information, visit **acscan.org.**