

## About Palliative Care

Palliative care is person and family-centred care provided for a person with an active, progressive, advanced disease, who has little or no prospect of cure and who is expected to die, and for whom the primary treatment goal is to optimise the quality of life.

You may receive palliative care at any age and while having active treatment. It is about supporting you to live well while you manage your illness. It is not just about cancer, and not just for care at the end of life.

### Talking about palliative care

Raising the subject of palliative care can be hard. Talking about death and dying can be difficult because many people feel it might make others uncomfortable.

People who provide palliative care give support to help you. This could be about medical treatment or about being cared for where you want.

### Coordinating palliative care

You can be involved in any planning of your care. You, your carers, and/or your family members can ask to be referred. You can talk to your doctor about your need for support. You can contact your local palliative care service to ask them about referral.



### You might not know that palliative care can help with many diseases, including:

- Alzheimer's and dementia
- AIDS
- Motor Neurone Disease and Multiple Sclerosis
- Advanced lung, heart, kidney and liver disease
- Disabling stroke and other neurological diseases
- Cancer.

### The role of health professionals

Many people who work in health can help provide palliative care. This may be at home, a GP clinic, or in a residential aged care facility. It can also be in a hospice or a hospital's palliative care unit. Care providers include:

**Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers/Practitioners** help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people obtain better health outcomes by providing culturally responsive care.

**Bereavement Counsellors** are trained to support people who are experiencing ongoing feelings of loss or grief.

**Care Workers** provide personal care and support to residents in aged care. This includes palliative care needs.

**Dietitians** can help patients with what they are eating and drinking, to develop a plan which focuses on the patients' needs and wishes.

**Doctors:** You may have a GP, a specialist or other doctors caring for you. When seeing a doctor it can be useful to have someone with you to help explain what is happening and assist you to remember the details of the conversation.

**Nurses** may provide physical care if it is needed, and also advice and support. They can talk about any medication that you need to take and help you find more information. They are there for you and your family to share feelings and emotions.

**Occupational Therapists (OTs)** help you to be as independent as possible by helping you to participate in everyday activities that are important to you. They can loan helpful aides for use at home.

**Paramedics** may assess your pain or symptoms and may provide you with treatment. Paramedics need to be aware if you have an advance care directive.

**Pastoral Care Workers and Chaplains** provide pastoral and spiritual care for all who want it.

**Pharmacists** provide helpful information on the effects of the drugs that you are taking.

They may review your medicines and make sure that you know what medication you are taking. They may talk to your health professionals or to your carer about your medicines.

**Physiotherapists** help people to keep moving and to function as well as they can.

**Psychologists** assess and help with emotions, behaviour and social factors related to palliative care. This includes pain management.

**Social Workers** help you and your family adjust to emotional, practical or social changes you experience.

**Speech Pathologists** work with the patient and family to help manage any communication and swallowing difficulties.

**Volunteers** work with health professionals to help provide emotional and practical help. This can include a range of tasks such as shopping trips, help with getting to appointments or providing company.

### The role of specialist palliative care

Palliative care may also be given by nurses or doctors with advanced training in palliative care. This is called specialist palliative care. You could receive this in a hospice or a palliative care ward in a hospital.

*CareSearch is a website that has been developed to provide trustworthy information about palliative care. For more information on this topic visit [www.caresearch.com.au](http://www.caresearch.com.au)*