

Palliative & End-of-life Care FAQ's

Is palliative care only available in the last few days before you die?

Palliative care can be available to people from the time they are first diagnosed with a life-limiting illness. People can receive palliative care for a long time before they die and may receive it at the same time as they receive treatment, sometimes referred to as supportive palliative care.

If I'm referred to palliative care, doesn't that mean my doctor has given up on me?

Not at all. Palliative care is available to people diagnosed with a life-limiting illness and is often provided in conjunction with active treatment. Palliative care can provide you with the support and tools you need to help ensure that you can meet your goals of care and fight for quality of life.

Is palliative care just about pain management?

Palliative care is person and family-centred care and will vary depending on each individual's needs and circumstances. Palliative care offers pain and relief of symptoms associated with a life-limiting illness. Palliative care can also include medication management; advice about food and nutrition, mobility and sleeping; support for emotional, social and spiritual concerns; counselling and grief support; and assistance for families and carers.

Isn't pain an inevitable part of dying?

Not everyone with a life-limiting illness will experience pain. Most pain can be relieved or controlled. Bringing pain under control means assessing all aspects of pain, monitoring and managing it. Effectively, this lets you carry on with your life and live as well as you can.

Can't you only receive palliative care in hospital?

Palliative care is provided where the person and their family wants to be, where possible. This may include the home, a hospice, hospital, palliative care outpatients facility, residential aged-care facility, disability care home, general practice or primary healthcare clinic.

Which health care professionals can help me with palliative care?

Your palliative care team may include people from a range of health, social support and other professional backgrounds. This may include: Doctors, Nurses, Allied health professionals, Social workers, Pharmacists, Physiotherapists, Occupational and speech therapists, Psychologists, Dietitians, Spiritual/pastoral practitioners and Palliative care volunteers.

Palliative & End-of-life Care FAQ's

What actually is palliative care and how is it different to end-of-life care?

While both palliative care and end-of-life care aim to improve the well-being of patients with serious illnesses, palliative care is a broader approach that can be provided earlier in the disease trajectory and focuses on enhancing overall quality of life. End-of-life care is more specific to the final stages of life (less than 12 months) when death is imminent and its primary focus is on ensuring a peaceful and comfortable transition for the patient.

What's the difference between Generalist and Specialist Palliative Care?

Generalist Palliative Care is where healthcare professionals provide care to those who are living with a life-limiting illness and support their families and carers. Such professionals are referred to as palliative care 'generalists' and can be General Practitioners (GPs), oncologists, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers, aged care workers, pharmacists and more. Find more information [here](#).

Some patients will have more complex needs when it comes to living their last days, so they'll need Specialist Palliative Care. These services comprise of multidisciplinary teams that have specialised skills, competencies, experience and training within the palliative care sector. If someone you know needs specialist palliative care services, you need to get a referral from your local healthcare provider. Find more information [here](#).

What's the difference between voluntary assisted dying and palliative care?

Palliative care aims to improve the quality of life of those who are living with a life-limiting illness, through the prevention and relief of suffering. Whereas voluntary assisted dying is one of several choices that may be available to someone at the end of their life.

It's important to note that a person's decision to seek information about or access to voluntary assisted dying doesn't impact their access to palliative care.

What are compassionate communities?

Compassionate communities are where everybody recognises that we all have a role to play in supporting each other in times of loss, ageing, dying and grief. So, we work together to publicly encourage, facilitate conversation, or support each other during life's most testing moments.