

Q: When is hospice appropriate?

A: Hospice is about making the most of every day. Hospice care is appropriate when a patient has reached the decision to forego extreme curative measures in favor of comfort care and seeks pain management and support for both the patient and family. This option of care can be discussed at any time during the illness.

Q: Who is eligible for hospice care?

A: A physician must certify that a hospice patient has an incurable illness and an estimated life expectancy of six months or less if the illness runs its normal course. The patient must agree to hospice care. We accept everyone who meets these criteria, regardless of the patient's financial situation or insurance coverage. The patient does not have to have family caregivers in the home.

Q: Should I wait for our physician to bring up the subject of hospice, or can I raise it first?

A: The decision to choose hospice should be made by the patient and family with the input of a physician. Open and frank discussion about treatment options should be held throughout the course of the illness. If the patient or family feels that a physician is reluctant to discuss hospice care, it is appropriate for the patient or family to initiate the discussion. Valor HospiceCare can assist in the discussion with the physician.

Q: Can we keep our own doctor?

A: Yes. If this is not possible or preferred, specially trained hospice physicians can assume patient care and treatment.

Q: Where is hospice care administered?

A: The majority of hospice care is provided in the patient's home, with family and friends acting as caregivers. If there is no private residence, the hospice can provide resources to assist the family with locating nursing homes or other types of care facilities. If a patient requires inpatient care in order to address severe symptoms or to provide respite for a caregiver, we have relationships with qualified skilled nursing facilities throughout our service area, allowing patients to be served in their own communities.

Q: Does most hospice care involve inpatient care in a facility?

A: Less than 3% of hospice care involves with inpatient hospital or skilled nursing facility care. As a level of care option, inpatient care is utilized only for emergency care for pain control and symptom management.

Q: Can a patient receive continuous care at home?

A: Most hospice care is intermittently provided by the team. Hospice can also provide continuous care at home until the pain control or symptom management crisis is managed. Private pay options are available for care outside of the hospice's established plan of care.

Q: What if the patient's condition improves?

A: Occasionally, hospice care can lead to improved life expectancy. When this happens a patient can be discharged from the hospice program. Later, when a patient becomes eligible for hospice, they can re-elect the hospice benefit and be admitted to the program again.

Q: Does Medicare and Medicaid/AHCCCS cover hospice services for certified programs?

A: Yes, including many managed care insurance providers.

For further information, please visit www.valorhospicecare.com.

Q: Do hospice medical directors have specialized training?

A: All of our Medical Director and Associate Medical Directors are board certified, and many are Board Certified in Hospice and Palliative Medicine. All of our medical directors participate in ongoing training, research and education to keep their knowledge current.

Q: Does hospice staff regularly discuss pain and symptom control with patients and families?

A: Yes, pain control is discussed when the nursing staff makes home visits.

Q: Does the hospice team discuss individual patient care?

A: Yes, the interdisciplinary team discusses the patient's plan of care on a weekly basis.

Q: Does the hospice staff address pain that is not of a physical nature?

A: We recognize that not all pain is physical. We have spiritual care providers, social workers and bereavement counselors to address spiritual and emotional distress, not only with patients but also with their families and loved ones.

Q: Is someone available 24 hours a day, seven days a week?

A: Not all problems occur between the hours of 8 and 5. We have an on-call team available 24/7. When you call in the evenings or on weekends, you will always be able to speak directly with a nurse. In addition, a physician and nurses are always available. A social worker and spiritual care provider are also on-call in case the need arises. If an evening or weekend visit is needed, you can count on us to be there for you.

Q: Are all hospice and palliative care services the same?

A: Hospice programs are the 'shining star' of the health care community. However, providing hospice and palliative care services can vary as much as hospitals, physicians, and other professional services. Our programs go beyond the standards of certification to provide exemplary care from our staff and unique programs to support the varying needs of patients, caregivers and families. The best choice is to choose a Medicare-certified and licensed hospice and palliative care program for the comprehensive benefits that are offered.

Q: Do patients pay for their medications while on hospice?

A: Any medication directly related to the hospice diagnosis is covered by Medicare and most insurance plans. Only hospice programs offer this benefit. Although Medicare allows hospice's to charge a co-payment for medications, we cover this charge at no cost to the patient.

Q: Are patients and family caregivers told how many visits they can expect from hospice staff?

A: We provide a written care plan and establish a schedule of patient visits to meet the needs of the patient.

Q: Does hospice staff try to involve the patient in all care decisions?

A: Yes.

Q: Are medications and equipment delivered?

A: Yes, we deliver to the home, nursing and long-term care facilities, or wherever the patient resides.

Q: Does hospice staff respect the patient's preferences for daily activities and schedules?

A: We encourage patients to do all that they can to live life to the fullest and we provide care according to their wishes.