

[Track 7: Hospice and Palliative Care]

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Before we tackle other symptoms, let's talk a little more about hospice.

There are many reasons why people DON'T want to go to hospice:

- Since the hospice team helps people die, we simply don't want to admit we're dying, or members of our family don't want to let us go. But hospice workers are there not only to make you comfortable, but also to support both you and your family in whatever way is needed. That means helping you with physical comfort, and helping you and your loved ones with emotional, social, and spiritual comfort.
- A referral to hospice usually means there are no more therapies that will work to try and cure your illness. But, there are many ways to make you more comfortable and to help control your pain and reduce suffering. Hospice care neither prolongs life nor hastens death.
- Many of you don't want to be in an unfamiliar place. Yet, most hospice care can be done within your own home, or in a comfortable and homey setting where family and friends can be with you at all times.
- You may also think accepting hospice services means you're giving up...or no longer fighting to live. But more often, it means you're still in control – just letting go in your own way and preparing for this final part of your life on your own terms.

There are many reasons to seek hospice care. Hospice provides a special kind of care for the person who is ill and their family. Hospice specializes in managing symptoms, so patients can die more comfortably and with dignity. Many people wish to die at home, if possible. They want to be around their loved ones, without limits on when they can visit. They want to see their pets and sit in their gardens. Eighty percent of hospice care is provided in the home of the patient or in a nursing home where the patient lives. Inpatient hospice facilities are sometimes available to assist with caregiving. Hospice can arrange for volunteers to help with errands, cooking, or other tasks, or simply to be there to give family members some quiet rest time. Some hospices have residences where patients can go to get pain or other symptoms under control, or to live out their final days.

Your doctor might suggest hospice, but when you hear about it you decide it just isn't right for you right now. It may be you still want aggressive treatment, or you already have the help you need. You have the right to make any decision you want to, and it's okay to say "no." You can always change your mind later if you decide you want hospice care in the future.