

*The Comfort of Home®*

# Caregiver Assistance News

"CARING FOR YOU... CARING FOR OTHERS"

## Hospice Care

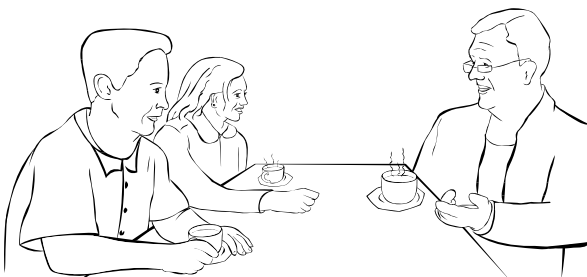
### *When an Illness Takes a Turn for the Worse*

Although terminal illness is a difficult thing to cope with, it also gives the person who is terminally ill and the family time to examine life, establish priorities, and renew or strengthen relationships. During this time, you can help in easing the transition by participating in choices in hospice care. A hospice team can help ensure that the person in your care is as comfortable as possible during this period. It can also guide the patient and family's choices for final arrangements.

### Discussing the Person's Wishes

When possible, discuss the person's and the family's wishes before an illness reaches the final phase.

- Does the person have a *health care proxy*?
- Is there a *living will* or *medical power of attorney*?
- What would the person's choices be regarding life support?



### What Hospice Care Provides

Hospice is a concept of medical care that delivers comfort and support to people in the final stages of a terminal illness—and to their families. Care is delivered by a team of specially trained medical professionals who focus on easing pain and managing symptoms. They provide medical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual care to the person and family. They assist the family in coping with their coming loss and their grief afterward.

Most hospice care is delivered in the home, but hospice care can also be provided in nursing homes and hospice facilities. The person who is ill and the family are the core of the hospice team and are at the center of all decision making.

Although a family member or other caregiver cares for the person on a daily basis, a hospice nurse is available 24 hours a day to provide advice and make visits. Hospice services include—

- physician services
- nursing services
- medical social services
- home health aide and homemaker services
- spiritual, dietary, and other counseling

**Continued from page 1**

- physical, occupational, and speech–language therapy
- medicine for controlling pain
- medical supplies and appliances
- ongoing care at home or in the hospital during periods of crisis
- special services for grief counseling
- trained volunteers for companionship, errands, or respite
- bereavement (grief) services for the family (or loved ones) for up to a year after death

**Criteria for Admission to a Hospice Care Program**

The person must be certified as terminally ill by his or her doctor and the hospice medical director. “Terminally ill” means having a life expectancy of six months or less if the disease runs its normal course.

Hospice care is offered for two periods of 90 days, followed by an unlimited number of 60-day periods, as long as the physician recertifies that the patient is not getting better and is still terminal. A patient may leave hospice care if his or her condition improves, and reenter if the condition worsens.

**How to Pay for Hospice Care**

Hospice care is a benefit under Medicare Hospital Insurance (Part A) to beneficiaries with a very limited life expectancy. To receive Medicare payments, the agency or organization must be approved by Medicare to provide hospice services. Under Medicare, hospice is primarily a program of care delivered in the person’s home by a Medicare-approved hospice to provide comfort and relief from pain.

*Resource for You***Hospice Foundation of America**

(800) 854-3402

[www.hospicefoundation.org](http://www.hospicefoundation.org)**National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization**

(800) 658-8898

[www.nhpco.org](http://www.nhpco.org)

*These organizations provide information and referral service, resources on end-of-life care, brochures on hospice, volunteering, and bereavement.*

Call your local **Social Security Administration, State Health Department, State Hospice Organization**, or call (800) 633-4227 **Medicare Hotline** to learn about hospice benefits.

## Taking Care of Yourself— The Last Expense

Consider less expensive funeral options such as a graveside service only or cremation, which generally costs between \$1,000 and \$2,000. Traditional funerals average \$7,500.

There are some places to which you can turn for help in paying for funerals.

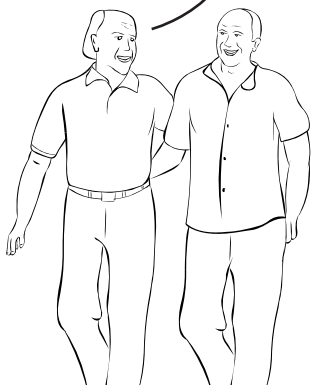
- Most counties have rules that provide that when a person does not have money or means necessary to defray funeral expenses, and his or her relatives or friends are unable or unwilling to pay, the county will provide for the burial. Check with your county treasurer's office for details.
- The surviving family member may be able to get a payment of \$255 from the Social Security Administration if your loved one or the survivor meets eligibility requirements.
- Veterans may qualify for some burial and memorial benefits through the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Source: Caring.com; New York Times



## Live Life Laughing!

Had I known I would live this long I would have taken better care of myself.



### Inspiration

Why are we embarrassed by silence? What comfort do we find in all the noise?

~ Mitch Albom



## Area Agency on Aging of North Idaho

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### *The Comfort of Home*®

#### **Our Purpose**

To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride, and competence.

#### **Ordering Info**

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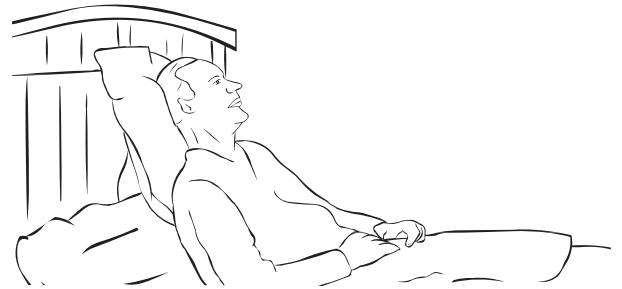
Comments and suggestions welcome.

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## **The Principles of Hospice Care**

Hospice has always recognized the importance of including the ill person, the family, and other loved ones in the care plan. Caregiving for someone who is dying can be demanding and it's important for *everyone* involved with a terminal illness to take proper care of his or her needs.



Hospice services can provide expert, compassionate care and make it possible for a dying person to remain at home. The earlier hospice care begins, the more it can help in providing the care needed at this time. It can also help loved ones enjoy the best quality of life as a family unit.

When a serious illness becomes life threatening, a person will go through many physical, emotional, and spiritual changes. Decisions to end medical treatment, seek hospice care, or to withdraw life support may need to be made. It's best to talk over these decisions with the physicians and family of the person in your care well before there is a health care crisis.

NEXT ISSUE...CONFIDENTIALITY-HIPAA OR HIPPOPOTAMUS?

# Caregiver Assistance News

“ C A R I N G F O R Y O U ... C A R I N G F O R O T H E R S ”

## Q U I C K Q U I Z

Toward the end of life, decisions to end medical treatment, seek hospice care, or to withdraw life support may need to be made. Answer True or False to the questions below to test your knowledge.

1. Hospice is a concept of medical care that delivers comfort and support to people in the final stages of a terminal illness—and to their families.  
T F
2. Although terminal illness is a difficult thing to cope with, it also gives the person who is terminally ill and the family time to examine life, establish priorities, and renew or strengthen relationships.  
T F
3. Hospice services can provide expert, compassionate care and make it possible for a dying person to remain at home.  
T F
4. Hospice care is never provided in nursing homes and hospice facilities.  
T F
5. The person must be certified as terminally ill by his or her doctor and the hospice medical director. “Terminally ill” means having a life expectancy of six months or less if the disease runs its normal course.  
T F
6. Hospice services does not include grief counseling.  
T F
7. Hospice care is offered for two periods of 90 days, followed by an unlimited number of 60-day periods, as long as the physician recertifies that the patient is not getting better and is still terminal.  
T F
8. Hospice care is a benefit under Medicare Hospital Insurance (Part A) to beneficiaries with a very limited life expectancy.  
T F
9. “Terminally ill” means having a life expectancy of six months or less if the disease runs its normal course.  
T F
10. It is *not* important to know what the terminally ill person’s choices are regarding life support.  
T F

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_