

# Can Hospice Help?

## A Caregiver's Perspective

Caregivers often wonder, "When should we call hospice?" While there is no simple answer to that question, there are some things to keep in mind as you care for someone with a serious illness.

Your local hospice can help you and the person receiving your care prepare for and adapt to the changes that illness brings. Suncoast Hospice offers a menu of care programs to meet both your needs and the needs of the person you are caring for at different stages of illness and caregiving.

### Questions to consider

- What changes have I seen in my care-receiver's health in the past year? 6 months?
- How do I expect my care-receiver's condition to change in the next year?
- What am I most concerned about right now?
- Am I feeling sad, exhausted, angry, isolated, guilty, anxious or depressed because of the changes in our lives?
- What decisions are we facing about treatments and/or medications?
- How has our quality of life been affected by this illness or its treatment?
- What changes have I noticed in my care-receiver's ability to get around and take care of daily activities such as bathing, dressing and eating changed in the past six months?
- How is pain or any other symptom affecting our quality of life?
- Are we making more frequent trips to the emergency room or hospital?
- What is truly important to the person for whom I care? To me? To others close to us?
- What kinds of assistance might free up more time or energy to spend on those things that are most important to us?
- Who can I call when I have a question or concern in the middle of the night or during the weekend?
- How are the responsibilities of caregiving affecting my daily life? My health?
- What is our back-up plan if something happens to me?

### Keep in mind

- You do not have to wait for your doctor to suggest hospice. You can contact your local hospice provider directly. Tell them about your situation. Ask questions.
- Some hospice providers offer a spectrum of care programs and will work with you to choose the services that best meet your goals.



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- Establishing a trusting relationship with a new care provider can take time. When your care provider has a chance to get to know you, the person who is ill, and other close friends or family members they become better equipped to offer care that honors your choices and priorities.
- Everyone is unique. The earlier someone begins receiving care, the more information their care team will have about what is normal for that person.
- Attention to the concerns and needs of personal caregivers – family and friends – is a fundamental part of what hospice care is all about.

## Talk to your hospice

- When looking for care that is guided by personal priorities and choices
- When pain or symptoms are interfering with quality of life
- When making decisions about treatments
- When you are looking for information about advance directives that help communicate choices about care
- When loss, caregiving and grief are affecting your life
- When looking for information about illness, dying and grief
- When you aren't sure what to do next

As an advocate for someone who is ill, you need to know what options for care are available. Hospices provide excellent clinical care focused on supporting you and the person for whom you care in living each day to the fullest. Hospice care is not about giving up. It is about comfort, well-being and quality of life. Look to your local hospice program for help in living with the changes that come with serious illness and caregiving.

Suncoast Hospice can offer guidance and support as you adjust to the changes in your life. In addition to a listening ear, we can provide information about services and resources available to help you. Call Suncoast Hospice at (727) 586-4432.

To find a hospice near you, contact the National Hospice & Palliative Care Organization help line at (800) 658-8898, or visit [www.nhpc.org](http://www.nhpc.org).



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