



Helpful Information when Considering Hospice

What is Hospice?

Hospice is a comprehensive model of care designed to meet the needs of people and their families whose goals of care are focused on quality of life rather than cure while facing a life-limiting illness. Hospice care is comfort-focused, this includes pain and symptom management as well as emotional and spiritual support for individuals and their loved ones. Hospice services are provided where the patient resides. This may include a private home, adult family home, assisted living facility, or a skilled nursing facility. At times hospice care may be provided in a hospital or at EvergreenHealth's Gene and Irene Wockner Hospice Care Center (HCC).

Who is Eligible for Hospice Services?

Hospice care is for individuals with a life expectancy of months versus years. Medical eligibility is defined as a life-limiting prognosis of 6 months or less of life (if the disease runs its normal course), and is determined by your medical provider and a hospice physician. In addition to cancer, some common hospice diagnoses are dementia, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), congestive heart failure (CHF), stroke (CVA) and Lou Gehrig's disease (ALS). A hospice team member will complete an eligibility evaluation during the admission visit.

Where does Hospice happen?

Hospice is a concept of care, not a "place" to go at the end of life. Hospice care is most often provided at the patient's "home"—this could be a private home, an adult family home, an assisted living facility, a skilled nursing facility, a hotel room, etc. While most hospice care can be managed in the "home" setting, there may be times that a higher level of care is needed for a short period to manage acute symptoms. This short-term care can be provided at a hospice contracted-hospital or at EvergreenHealth's HCC.

Who Pays for Hospice Care?

Medicare, Medicaid, and many private insurance plans provide a specific hospice care benefit. Hospice services are fully covered under the Medicare benefit. Private insurance coverage is determined by your specific plan. Since services are covered on a daily basis, any copayments or coinsurance will apply on a per day basis. The Hospice care team is available to help with questions you may have; but please contact your insurer if you have questions about your specific plan's hospice benefit.

What does Hospice Care cover?

A Hospice care team provides comfort focused care with intermittent visits.

- Registered nurses provide clinical management, nursing care, and support
- Social workers provide counseling and facilitate access to resources
- Chaplains provide spiritual, mental, and/or emotional support
- Certified nursing assistants provide personal care and companionship
- Hospice physicians collaborate with the patient's primary physician for management of care
- Pharmacists consult on medication management
- Trained volunteers offer companionship for patients and can assist the caregiver with simple errands
- 24/7 phone availability for registered nurse consult and support
- After-hours nursing visits for urgent clinical needs
- Bereavement services for 13 months following the loss of a loved one

Hospice covers medications for comfort and those related to the hospice diagnosis. These may include medications for pain or discomfort, shortness of breath, nausea or anxiety. The nurse will start discussing medications at the initial nursing assessment visit, then continue discussion at subsequent visits.

Can I continue Medications or Treatments for my Condition while on Hospice?

Hospice care focuses on comfort and quality of life. Hospice covers all medications related to the hospice diagnosis and needed for alleviating symptoms related to the hospice diagnosis. Hospice does not cover curative medications as the goal of hospice is comfort. Hospice may provide durable medical equipment and supplies related to the hospice prognosis. These may include:

- Hospital bed, wheelchair, walker, bedside commode, oxygen, over bed table and more
- Incontinence supplies such as gloves, wipes, briefs and more

Does Hospice provide Fulltime Caregiving?

Hospice does not provide full-time caregiving. Hospice staff will visit intermittently; the frequency of visits is determined by the assessment of the patient's clinical needs (which may change throughout the time on service). A nursing visit occurs at least biweekly, and typically visits from all members of the hospice team increase as end-of-life gets closer. Patients and their caregivers are able to contact their hospice care team by phone Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. if they have questions or needs between scheduled visits. There is also on-call nurse support available 24 hours per day for more urgent needs. The hospice social worker is a resource to offer practical and emotional support while patients and families determine a fulltime caregiving plan.

Does Hospice cover “Room and Board” Expenses?

Hospice does not cover expenses related to housing, food, or room and board. Individuals must cover these costs either through private payment or through Medicaid (if they qualify). If you or your loved one resides at a facility, it is important to work with facility staff to determine how starting hospice may impact you or your loved one’s expenses.

Can I get Home Health when on Hospice?

Medicare and other insurers will not cover hospice and home health services simultaneously. The goal of home health is to rehabilitate and recover while the goal of hospice is comfort. Certain limited therapy services may be included in the hospice plan of care based on the hospice nursing assessment.

Can People go to the Hospital while on Hospice?

Typically people on hospice service wish to avoid returning to the hospital, and hospice support can help them achieve that goal. Going to the hospital for life-saving or life-prolonging interventions or treatments is not generally aligned with the hospice approach, however there are times that hospital-level care may be indicated for acute symptom management. It is important to contact the hospice team to discuss options before making a hospital or Emergency Department visit, otherwise the patient may be financially responsible for the cost of those services.



What if Symptoms cannot be Managed well at Home?

If more intensive medical care is needed, the care team may suggest a short-term stay at the Hospice Care Center, which is just east of EvergreenHealth Medical Center in Kirkland, WA. The center is a 15 bed in-patient facility for individuals on hospice service who have complex medical needs or whose symptoms need 24 hour care and management requiring hospital level of care. Stays at the HCC are meant to be short term until symptoms subside or are better managed.

How long can someone receive Hospice Services?

An individual can receive hospice as long as they are deemed eligible for hospice services as determined by the hospice care team based on the Medicare guidelines. Sometimes people receive hospice services for over six months. Sometimes a person's condition stabilizes or improves and they are no longer eligible for hospice services in a shorter timeframe. If an individual is discharged from hospice services, hospice services can be restarted again in the future if medical eligibility for hospice is established.

How do I start Hospice Services for Myself or a Loved One?

Anyone may contact EvergreenHealth Hospice to request a hospice evaluation. If you or a loved one is at a care facility or hospital, the social worker or medical team can assist you with the referral to hospice. We will work with you to schedule a hospice admission visit. A hospice team member will complete an evaluation during the admission visit to determine if you or your loved one qualify for services.

It is important that the Durable Power of Attorney(s)/legal decision maker is present during the hospice evaluation/admission visit. If the patient is not decisional and the DPOA/legal decision maker is not able to attend, it is critical the hospice admission forms are signed in advance. The hospice admission cannot take place unless this occurs.

Contact EvergreenHealth Hospice at 425.899.1020 if you have a confirmed hospice admission visit but your plans or circumstances change and you no longer wish to proceed with hospice. This allows us to reschedule your appointment time with another individual in need of hospice services.

Why choose EvergreenHealth Hospice?

EvergreenHealth Hospice is one of the largest local hospice agencies and has been providing quality, patient-centered end of life care for over 25 years. The only inpatient hospice facility in King County, EvergreenHealth Hospice consistently ranks above state and national benchmarks in quality measures. Our dedicated and experienced interdisciplinary team works together with a common purpose to provide patients the highest quality end-of-life care possible.

Please contact EvergreenHealth Hospice at 425.899.1020 with questions or concerns.