



HOSPICE AND PALLIATIVE CARE

FAMILY CAREGIVERS

National Hospice and
Palliative Care Month

A Caregiver's Role During Hospice and Palliative Care

The caregiver role looks different when a patient is in hospice or palliative care. Learn about how caregivers can bring quality & comfort to their patients during this time.

National Hospice and Palliative Care Month

November is National Hospice and Palliative Care Month. Hospice and Palliative Care can help when someone has a serious illness or medical condition.

What is Hospice?

Hospice is specialized care designed to support an individual with a terminal illness as well as their friends and family. Rather than focusing on a cure for the illness, hospice aims to provide comfort and quality of life for the remainder of the person's life. Hospice seeks to administer and maintain care pain-free, giving individuals time and comfort to spend with their loved ones. Hospice also can provide emotional support for family members coping with the idea of losing their loved one.



What is Palliative Care?

Palliative care is specialized medical care for people with a serious illness. It can be combined with curative treatment and focuses on providing relief and stress from the illness. The goal of palliative care is to improve the quality of life for the patient and their loved ones. The medical care of doctors, nurses, social workers and other specialists work with an individual's doctor to provide extra support.



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What caregivers should know when their seniors or loved one is in need of these services (www.nhpco.org)

A caregiver's primary role is to provide support to the individual in hospice or palliative care as well as their loved ones.

Caregivers who are family members or friends may need a break from their caregiving duties. Hospice Respite Care is designed to provide a temporary break from their hospice patient. This will allow the caregiver to take a short vacation or attend a family event. Respite care provides support in a facility for up to 5 days.

Family members can supplement their caregiving by hiring a professional caregiver to take care of important tasks and errands so loved ones can focus on quality time with their loved one.

Caregivers can Enhance Quality of Life

Caregivers can help enhance the quality of life for older adults who are in hospice by doing various tasks for them. Individuals may have a small appetite and may have difficulty swallowing, so preparing small meals that are easy to swallow are helpful. Also, having nice, loose clothing that they can easily wear will help them feel comfortable and looking their best.

Getting and Staying Organized (www.caringinfo.org)

Getting and staying organized will be a key factor for the caregiver. The better organized you are, the more the patient and their family can enjoy time together.

Start a notebook where you can keep important phone numbers, medications and notes about the patient. Utilize the notebook when you need to add important caregiving tasks, appointment schedules and locations, daily routines for the patient and more. The more organized you are as a caregiver, the less burden a family will feel.

Home Safety (www.caringinfo.org)

Caregivers can ensure that wherever a patient is, the room and common areas are safe for them. Whether a loved one has the patient in their home, or the patient is living in their own home, caregivers can go through and do a general safety inspection to make sure it is fit for the patient.

Things to look for when checking for safety:



Handrails to help move from room to room



Raised toilet seat



Grab bars in the bathtub, shower and near the toilet



Nonskid mats on the bathroom floor and bathtub



Properly working smoke alarms and fire extinguishers throughout the home



Emergency numbers such as the hospital, fire department and 911 posted in a central location



Guardrails on the bed if the patient is physically disabled

Caregivers can also take into account the needs of each patient including their mobility, communication and physical abilities and look and recommend other things that may be needed in the home.



Home Care Tip:

A professional caregiver can provide comfort care to hospice patients and support family members who want to spend quality time with their loved one. Common care schedules can include overnight shifts where the caregiver stays awake during the night to make sure the night stays comfortable and can contact family members if the need arises.