

When hospice comes home

A one-page guide for families



From the website of *I'm Here for the Bath*
by Peter Rolita, hospice aide

WHAT HOSPICE IS

Hospice care focuses on the care, comfort and quality of life of a person with a serious illness who is approaching the end of life. At this stage, treatment meant to cure the illness stops and care turns fully to comfort.

A hospice team supports both the patient and the family with medical, emotional and spiritual care.

WHO QUALIFIES UNDER MEDICARE

Medicare covers hospice care when all of these are true:

- You have Medicare Part A (Hospital Insurance).
- Your hospice doctor and your regular doctor, if you have one, certify that you are terminally ill, with a life expectancy of six months or less.
- You accept comfort care (palliative care) instead of care to cure your illness.
- You sign a statement choosing hospice care instead of other Medicare-covered treatments for your terminal illness and related conditions.

WHAT IT COSTS WITH MEDICARE

For covered hospice services from a Medicare-approved hospice, you pay nothing. You pay a copayment of up to \$5 for each prescription for outpatient drugs for pain and symptom management. You may pay 5% of the Medicare-approved amount for inpatient respite care, which is short-term care that gives caregivers a rest.

Medicare doesn't cover room and board, whether you get hospice care in your home or live in a nursing home or a hospice inpatient facility.

WHERE CARE IS GIVEN

Hospice care can be given at home or wherever a person lives, such as an assisted living facility or a nursing home. It can also be given in a hospital or in a separate inpatient hospice facility.

WHO IS ON THE TEAM

A hospice team usually includes doctors, nurses, hospice aides, social workers, spiritual advisors and trained volunteers. Together they give medical, emotional and spiritual support.

Someone from the team is usually available by phone 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

WHAT THE HOSPICE AIDE DOES

A hospice aide gives hands-on personal care, such as bathing, grooming and dressing.

A registered nurse visits at least every 14 days to check the quality of the care the aide provides.

YOUR OWN DOCTOR AND OTHER CARE

You can still see your regular doctor or nurse practitioner if you have chosen them to be the attending medical professional who helps supervise your hospice care.

Original Medicare still pays for covered benefits for any health problems that aren't part of the terminal illness.

AFTER A DEATH

Medicare-certified hospices must make bereavement services available to the family for up to one year after the patient's death.

OUR HOSPICE TEAM

Hospice

Phone, day and night

Hospice nurse

Social worker

Doctor

Pharmacy

TALKING ABOUT WISHES

A good first step is talking about what matters most to the person. The Conversation Project, an initiative of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, offers a free Conversation Starter Guide.

MORE HELP

Medicare hospice coverage Who qualifies, what is covered and what you pay. [medicare.gov/coverage/hospice-care](https://www.medicare.gov/coverage/hospice-care)

Eldercare Locator Local services for older adults and caregivers. Call 1-800-677-1116. eldercare.acl.gov

The Conversation Project Free guides for talking about end-of-life wishes. theconversationproject.org

CaringInfo Advance directives, hospice and caregiving information. caringinfo.org

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline Call or text 988 or chat online. 988lifeline.org