

Better Quality of Life During Illness: Eight Common Questions About Palliative Care

Discomfort, difficulty breathing and nausea are just a few distressing symptoms experienced by someone suffering from a serious illness. Fortunately, a rapidly growing medical subspecialty called Palliative Care can be combined with current medical treatments to address and even alleviate symptoms for patients.

Palliative care can prevent and ease suffering and improve quality of life at all stages of illness, and is suitable for any age. For several years, Palos Hospital has offered palliative and supportive care in the inpatient setting; in 2016 Palos opened a new outpatient clinic to better support patients and families in our community. Below are eight questions about palliative and supportive care with helpful answers that further explain the benefits for you or a loved one.

What is palliative care?

Palliative care addresses the physical, emotional and social aspects of serious illness.

At Palos the palliative and supportive care team is made up of doctors, advanced practice nurses and social workers that collaborate with other depart-

ments--including Interventional Radiology, Cancer Rehabilitation and Behavioral Health--to provide patient-centered care that is tailored to the needs of the patient and family.

Is palliative care only for end stage illnesses?

Many people confuse palliative care with hospice or end-of-life care. Instead, palliative care focuses on improving quality

of life through symptom management and support for the patient and family, from diagnosis to all stages of illness. The clinic at Palos aligns with the hospital's vision of a continuum of care that reaches beyond hospital walls, meeting the needs of patients that are not hospitalized. The clinic is able to offer an extra layer of support for patients and their families.

WHAT IS PALLIATIVE CARE?

It is care for patients with serious illnesses and their families

It can be given in homes, health centers, hospitals and hospices

It improves quality of life



Helps patients by reducing unnecessary hospital visits

It relieves physical, psychological and spiritual suffering

It can be done by many types of health care professionals

How soon after diagnosis can patients receive palliative care?

According to recent studies published in the Journal of Clinical Oncology, receiving palliative care soon after diagnosis can result in better outcomes for patients. One component of palliative care is to help patients and families understand the nature of the illness and make timely, informed decisions about their care. Many patients report improved quality of life and ability to function as well as a better understanding of their options and a greater feeling of control. Families and caregivers can experience less stress and greater satisfaction with care.

Can palliative care benefit patients with chronic diseases?

Palliative care can help those with cancer, cardiac diseases such as congestive heart failure (CHF), chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), kidney failure, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) and many others. Critically ill patients in intensive care are also good candidates.

What symptoms can palliative care help alleviate?

A number of symptoms affect patients with chronic and severe illness, including nausea, fatigue and shortness of breath. The palliative and supportive care team at Palos can help identify and address these symptoms and others. The goal is always to improve quality of life, and in many cas-

es that means helping manage pain, whether it is due to cancer or chronic illnesses.

What emotional symptoms does palliative care address?

Palliative care can help address distressing symptoms like grief and depression. The palliative and supportive care team is trained to distinguish between normal preparatory grieving and clinical depression and offer timely treatment to improve mood and sense of hope.

How can palliative care improve communication with physicians?

Excellent communication skills are important when dealing with a serious illness, and palliative care professionals are trained to assist in complex exchanges. Team members at Palos partner with health care practitioners to help reinforce caring and compassionate communication that will be well received by patients and their families. By working together, palliative care practitioners can promote understanding between everyone involved and guide patients and families through decisions about the degree of care desired.

Can palliative care shorten hospital stays?

Palliative and supportive care specialists work closely with the patient, his or her family, physicians and nurses to identify objectives of care. One result of this shared goal setting can be reduced time in the hospital or other health care setting.

Beginning palliative care at Palos

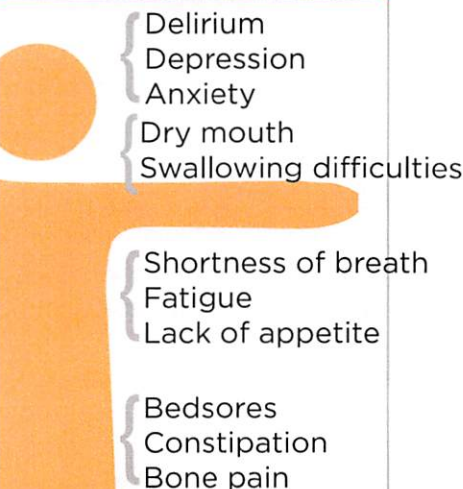
Beginning the palliative care process at Palos is easy. Patients can receive a referral from their physician or simply call the clinic and request an appointment. At the first appointment, patient needs are identified and discussed, and options are reviewed for symptom management. Patients receive assistance in establishing individualized goals of care, and regular follow up meetings are scheduled. Patients and their families at Palos will know they have help and support to better manage the symptoms of their illness and experience greater relief from pain and discomfort.

Palos Health Palliative & Supportive Care services are available:

- In the home
- In outpatient and community settings
- As an inpatient

To schedule an appointment, please call: 630-257-1111

SYMPTOMS HELPED BY PALLIATIVE CARE

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- Delirium
 - Depression
 - Anxiety
 - Dry mouth
 - Swallowing difficulties
 - Shortness of breath
 - Fatigue
 - Lack of appetite
 - Bedsores
 - Constipation
 - Bone pain