

What is Palliative & End of Life Care

What is it?

Palliative and end of life care is special medical care for adults and children diagnosed with a serious illness that will shorten their life (a life-limiting illness). This type of care is focused on helping you to be comfortable, with the best quality of life possible.



The care is given by a palliative and end of life care team that works with you, your family and caregivers, and your family doctor. You all work together to make health care decisions that are right for you.

Who is it for?

Palliative and end of life care supports you and your family through your whole illness. It's not only for people who are close to dying from a serious illness (e.g., cancer or heart failure). It's also for people who have many months to live, with illnesses that don't get better or may get worse over time. Health professionals, programs, and services work to meet your goals so you get the most quality out of life.

People can live for many years with a chronic disease. Palliative and end of life care gives extra support at all stages of a chronic illness, not just near the end of life

What types of services are offered?

Your palliative and end of life care services are based on your wishes and goals. Decisions about your health care are based on your choices through "Advance Care Planning." Assistance in the NWT can be accessed at: http://www.dhssa.hss.gov.nt.ca/sites/default/files/personal_directives_act.pdf.

Services may be different depending on where you live. Here are some that may be included:

- supporting you to live and feel as well as possible
- helping you make decisions about where to get care (e.g., your home, a hospital, or continuing care centre) as your illness and needs change
- helping you and your family decide on your wishes or goals of care
- managing your pain and symptoms (e.g. nausea, breathing problems)
- helping you and your family understand what to expect from your illness
- giving emotional and spiritual support
- answering questions about the end of life (e.g., organ and tissue donation, funeral plans)
- offering volunteer support for you (e.g., making meals, running errands)
- connecting your family to grief and bereavement services

How to get it?

If you're thinking about palliative and end of life care, don't wait for your doctor or loved ones to bring it up. Talk to your loved ones and health care team in an open and honest way. Deciding on your wishes and sharing them can help ease your mind and make your final days more peaceful.

- Write down any questions you have about palliative and end of life care to ask your doctor at your next visit. Ask your doctor to go over options with you and explain the pros and cons of each.
- Think about the kinds of treatment you want or don't want. [Your doctor or health care professional will ask you questions about what's important to you and the type of care you want.](#) ("My Health Alberta" resource) Your answers will help give everyone a clear idea of your care wishes.

Talk to your family and tell them what you want. You can also write down your wishes so that everyone will know them in case, later on, you can't speak for yourself. In the NWT this is called a Personal Directive. Please see at:

http://www.dhssa.hss.gov.nt.ca/sites/default/files/personal_directives_act.pdf.

- Tell your family and doctor what you decide so they can help carry out your wishes.

Find out more about Advance Care Planning and Goals of Care Designations at conversationsmatter.ca. ("Alberta Health" resource.)

How do I get services in my area?

- Services are provided through the local health centre or home nursing program.
- In the NT, most palliative care is provided in the home with a combination of family, professional and community supports.
- When the necessary services can no longer be provided safely in the home or community, you may be transferred to a bed in a care facility (hospital or long term care).
- Palliative care beds are available at Stanton Regional Hospital, Hay River Hospital, the Inuvik Hospital and some long term care facilities. Referrals to these beds are through the physician or the community health network.
- Your health care providers will discuss with you and your family your wishes for care. These wishes are honored as the Personal Directives of the individual.
- Information and forms relating to Personal Directives are available at the NT Health and Social Services website:
- http://www.dhssa.hss.gov.nt.ca/sites/default/files/personal_directives_act.pdf

Talk to your family and your health care team about what's important to you and where you'd like to be at this time in your illness. Your choice may change as your illness changes.

Home, Community, & Palliative Care

Call 867-767-9030 or your local health centre to learn more. Also, go to:

<http://www.hss.gov.nt.ca/en/services/continuing-care-services/home-and-community-care>

Palliative Services in Hospitals

You need a referral from a health care professional to get palliative care [services in hospitals](#). Tell your health care team that you would like a referral to in-hospital Palliative Care Services.

Palliative Services in Long Term Care

You need a referral from a health care professional to get palliative care in a long term care facility. Talk with your health care provider regarding the options in your area.

<https://myhealth.alberta.ca/palliative-care> : palliative and end of life care in Alberta

<http://www.palliative.org/palliative-care-services.html> : palliative and end of life care in Edmonton
