

What Is Palliative Care?

Palliative care is specialized care that provides, if needed, an extra layer of support to patients with and survivors of serious illnesses, such as cancer, and their families and caregivers.



Palliative care is not the same as hospice care, because it is given throughout a person's experience with cancer, beginning at diagnosis and continuing through treatment, follow-up, survivorship, and end-of-life care.

Palliative care can be given in addition to cancer treatment or to those with no curative treatment options; palliative care given near the end of life when curative treatment has stopped is usually referred to as hospice care.

Palliative care addresses many of the challenges that can affect quality of life after a cancer diagnosis, including:

- Emotional challenges, such as anxiety and depression.
- Physical symptoms and adverse effects of the disease and its treatment, such as pain, nausea, vomiting, fatigue, difficulty sleeping, and loss of appetite.
- Practical challenges, such as navigating the health care system.
- Spiritual challenges.