

# What is Palliative Care?

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## **What is palliative care?**

Palliative care is specialized medical care for people with serious illnesses. The goal is to improve quality of life for both the patient and the family.

Palliative care focuses on managing symptoms such as pain, shortness of breath, fatigue, constipation, nausea, difficulty sleeping, depression, and others. It improves your ability to tolerate medical treatments. It also helps you have more control over your care by improving your understanding of your treatment choices.

## **How is palliative care different from Hospice care?**

Like Hospice, the goals of palliative care are to relieve symptoms and enhance the quality of life for patients with advanced illness. Depending on patient needs, palliative care may be used alongside curative treatments. This approach to care is different from hospice care, which focuses on people in their final weeks or months of life. Palliative care covers patients who are facing any serious condition, terminal or not, and can be beneficial during any stage of illness.

## **Can my doctor take care of my palliative needs?**

Your doctor will ask you about your symptoms and can help take care of them. You should especially let them know about these symptoms when they are causing you distress. If you and your doctor decide that more help is needed, you may consider a consultation with the UMHS Palliative Care Service.

## **What is the Palliative Care Service at UMHS?**

The Palliative Care Service at UMHS is a partnership of patient, specialists and family. The core team includes doctors, nurses and social work palliative care specialists. Pharmacists, nutritionists, chaplains and others may also be part of the team.

The UMHS palliative care team spends as much time as necessary with you and your family. They partner with you, your family and your other doctors in order to support you and your family every step of the way. They work to control

your symptoms, and also to help you understand your treatment options and goals of care.

### **What services does the UMHS Palliative Care Team provide?**

- Discussion of patient wishes, overall goals of care and development of treatment plans
- Education for patients and families about palliative care, diseases, prognosis, and treatment of symptoms
- Pain and symptom management
- Treatment for distressing symptoms, such as anxiety and depression
- Ongoing support and coordination of care with the primary physician
- Work with hospice programs, if appropriate, to coordinate care and address questions
- Assistance with accessing Medicare, Medicaid and other benefits
- Support for family members experiencing caregiver stress, grief and bereavement
- Help with difficult decisions often encountered, including:
  - Assigning a durable power of attorney for healthcare
  - Living wills and other advanced directives
  - Decisions about “DNR” or resuscitation
- Advance care planning
  - Decisions about feeding tubes, artificial nutrition and hydration
  - Decisions about hospice care

### **How do I request a consultation with the Palliative Care Service?**

Talk to your doctor about your symptoms. Together, you can decide if a consultation with the UMHS Palliative Care Service is appropriate for you.

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