



Omega Health Care FAQs

How does hospice manage pain?

Omega Health Care nurses and doctors are experts on the latest medications and devices for pain and symptom relief. Omega Health Care believes that emotional and spiritual pain is just as real and in need of attention as physical pain. Counselors, including chaplains, are available to assist family members as well as patients.

What is Omega Health Care's success rate in battling pain?

With a combination of medications, counseling and therapies, most patients can attain a level of comfort that is acceptable to them.

Will medications prevent the patient from being able to talk or know what is happening?

Usually not. It is the goal of Omega Health Care to help patients be as comfortable and alert as they desire.

Is hospice care covered by insurance?

Hospice coverage is provided by Medicare nationwide, by Medicaid in most states, and by most private health insurance policies.

Who pays for hospice care?

Hospice care is an established part of the health care system. Services are covered by Medicare & most insurance plans. Most patients are on Medicare. Those who elect to use the Medicare Hospice Benefit for their serious illness choose "the hospice plan of care," which means they are no longer seeking aggressive treatments to cure their illness. The Hospice Medicare Benefit covers all services related to the terminal diagnosis: medical and nursing care, social services and counseling, chaplain services, certified nursing assistants for personal care in the home, medications delivered to the home, medical equipment and supplies, and care in specialized inpatient hospice homes for acute symptom management. For more information, view the U.S. Government Web site: www.medicare.gov or call the Medicare Customer Representative: (800) 633-4227

How many family members or friends does it take to care for a patient at home?

There is no set number. The Omega Health Care team prepares an individualized care plan that meets the needs and goals of the patient and family. Staff members visit regularly and are always accessible to answer questions and provide support.

How difficult is caring for a dying loved one at home?

It is never easy and sometimes can be quite hard. At the end of a long, progressive illness, nights especially can be very long, lonely and scary. Omega Health Care has staff available around the clock and on weekends to consult with the family and to make visits when needed.

Will my doctor still be my doctor once I am on hospice care?

Hospice functions as an extension of, not in place of, the patient's attending physician. The agency also has medical directors available to help patients who have no physician or need physician home visits.

When should a decision about entering a hospice program be made, and who should make it?

It is appropriate to discuss all of a patient's care options, including hospice, at any time during a life-limiting illness. The decision belongs to the patient. Hospice staff members are available to facilitate the discussion.

Should I wait for our physician to suggest the possibility of hospice, or should I bring it up first?

The patient and family should feel free to discuss hospice care at any time with their physician, other healthcare professionals, clergy, and friends.

What if our physician doesn't know about hospice?

If your physician wants more information, we invite him or her to call us. Or you may call us, and we will contact your physician.

Who is eligible for hospice care?

Hospice care is for people with a life-limiting illness who want comfort care rather than curative treatment. It is time to consider hospice care when one or more of these circumstances apply: loss of function or physical decline; increase in hospitalizations; dependence in most activities of daily living; multiple diseases or conditions; increase in emergency room visits, and continuing weight loss. Each disease has its own criteria indicating hospice eligibility. A physician must certify that the person's life expectancy is six months or less, but that time frame is flexible and services can be extended beyond six months.

Does hospice do anything to make death come sooner?

Hospice does nothing to speed up or slow down the dying process. Just as doctors and midwives lend support and expertise during the time of childbirth, so hospice provides its presence and specialized knowledge during the natural dying process.

What does the admission process involve?

A phone call to us is all that is needed to begin the admission process. The agency will contact the patient's physician for confirmation that hospice care is appropriate for the patient at this time.

Can a patient who shows signs of recovery resume regular medical treatment?

Certainly. If improvement in the condition occurs and the disease appears in remission, the patient can be discharged from hospice and return to getting regular treatment. If a discharged patient elects to return later to hospice care, Medicare and most private insurance plans will cover it. Medicare allows people to go on and off hospice as needed.

Is Omega Health Care affiliated with any religious organization or other hospice?

Omega Health Care is an independent, free-standing organization. It serves a broad community and does not require patients to adhere to any particular set of beliefs.

Is Omega Health Care a place?

Hospice is a philosophy of care that focuses on maintaining the dignity and comfort of the patient and supporting the family. Most Omega Health Care patients are served in their own homes. Some are cared for in group homes or nursing homes.

Is there any special equipment or changes I have to make in my home before hospice care begins?

Omega Health Care will assess your needs, recommend any necessary equipment and help make arrangements to obtain it. Equipment such as wheelchairs, oxygen and hospital beds are covered by the Medicare hospice benefit and insurance plans.

Does hospice provide help to the family after the patient dies?

Omega Health Care provides continuing contact and support for family and friends following the death of a loved one.