

What is palliative care?

Palliative care focuses on improving a person's quality of life throughout the course of serious illness, or after a life-changing injury. Patients often receive palliative care along with other medical treatments—such as intensive care, cardiac or cancer care—as an extra layer of support that is based on your needs, not your diagnosis.

Palliative care can begin whenever you and your health care provider feel it can help.

For many patients, this happens shortly after the diagnosis of a serious condition.



Who benefits from palliative care?

Our Palliative Care Team provides personalized services, resources and support for patients with a wide range of medical challenges, such as:

- People living with cancer, serious heart conditions, Lou Gehrig's Disease (ALS), Alzheimer's Disease and other life-threatening conditions, as well as their loved ones, who have concerns and questions of their own
- Infants and children living with complex medical needs, as well as their parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters
- Elders living with the health concerns of aging, as well as their spouses/partners and adult children who may assist with their daily care

At DHMC, palliative care services are available to patients in the hospital as well as to those being treated in clinics. If hospice care is chosen, we work closely with hospice teams in a person's community to ensure a smooth transition to care in the family's home or a nearby assisted-living setting.

Would you or someone you love benefit from palliative care?

Please ask your health care provider or call the Palliative Care Team at (603) 650-5402 for answers to your questions.



patients.dh.org/palliativecare
One Medical Center Drive, Lebanon, NH 03756
(603) 650-5402

Palliative Care Services and Resources

Living Well with Serious Illness



Palliative care services for patients and loved ones

Patients and their families may choose to receive these and other palliative care services:

- Expert management of pain and physical symptoms
- Support in understanding and choosing among treatment choices
- Care coordination among primary and specialty care physicians, care teams, therapists and others
- “24/7” phone availability for patients and their clinicians, in case of questions or urgent after-hours needs
- Social work and advocacy services, including practical help in completing insurance forms, choosing among options for care or places to live, and creating advance directive documents and care plans
- Crisis prevention and management plans for safety and peace of mind
- Massage and other soothing therapies
- Spiritual care and support for people of all faiths and beliefs
- Support for families and friends who are grieving a person’s death



You may be wondering...

What happens now that I’ve been referred to palliative care?

We begin by getting to know one another. At our first meeting, we discuss what matters most to you and your loved ones, including your personal values and treatment preferences. Then, we work together with you, your family and your other health care providers—to help you live well with your conditions and treatments.

Here are some questions we know people often have (but rarely ask)

Does referral to palliative care mean I’m dying?

No. Receiving palliative care does not mean you’re dying. Being referred to palliative care means that you are dealing with difficult medical problems—ones that can cause pain, emotional uncertainty and personal complications for you and the people you love. By addressing pain, reducing stress and improving comfort, people tend to sleep better and eat a bit better and stay more active. It is not surprising that their health improves—and sometimes people live longer!

Do I need to stop medical treatments in order to receive palliative care?

No. We support doing whatever you, your family and your primary health care team feel is right for you. Many of the patients we see are receiving treatments, such as chemotherapy or radiation for cancer, cardiac procedures, such as angiography or pacemakers, and surgery. You may choose to enroll in clinical trials that offer experimental approaches for your condition. If difficult decisions about treatments arise, we can help you sort through the options.

Will my insurance company cover palliative care?

Most insurers and health plans pay for medical components of palliative care. We are fortunate to have institutional support from DHMC and private donations that enable us to provide interdisciplinary palliative care to people regardless of any insurance limitations or their ability to pay.

I’m so sick of being sick, and of the energy and time that health care takes from my everyday life. Do I really need to add palliative care to my long list of appointments?

If you are feeling that way, most likely the answer is YES. Feeling overwhelmed is a common challenge of illness and treatment. Palliative care services are designed to reduce—not add to—the stress and energy-sapping effects of illness. Your appointments will fit your needs and be focused on what matters most to you at that very moment. Together, we can help ease the struggle and exhaustion of being sick.

I’m worried about my family and the toll my illness seems to be taking. Can you help them?

Yes. Your family helps make you who you are. Those you love play an important part in your health. We welcome the chance to meet and talk with your partner, parents, siblings, children and good friends.

When people hear I’m about to receive palliative care, they assume it is hospice. Are they right?

No. This is a common misunderstanding. Palliative care grew from the great things that hospice has done for people facing the end of their lives. We learned that the positive experiences and exceptional care people receive from hospice actually make life worth living for many patients. The palliative care team at DHMC brings similar services to people during the course of illness, allowing full and active living within the limitations caused by a medical condition.