

Accessing Palliative Care



Palliative care is delivered in different ways and for varying amounts of time. It is not only for people with cancer. You can *ask your doctor* to refer you to palliative care at any stage of your illness and especially if you no longer wish to have curative treatment or if your treatment is not adequately controlling your symptoms. Generally speaking, you must have been diagnosed with a serious illness that is progressing.

Your doctor may refer you to palliative care if s/he would like some advice on symptom management and supportive care for you and your family. This referral may still be relevant whilst you are undergoing curative treatment.

Depending on your circumstances, palliative care can be delivered in your home or in a Residential Aged Care Facility (nursing home) in a general ward or specialised palliative care ward in a hospital; and/or in a specialised 'in-patient' facility (formerly called a hospice)'.

Usually, there is no charge for Specialist Palliative Care services.

If you are in a hospital or a specialised in-patient facility and your symptoms are stable, arrangements will be made for you to be discharged home. If you do not have anyone to care for you at home and are unable to care for yourself, you may be referred to a nursing home. Staff there will work with your doctor and your local palliative care team in caring for you.

You can contact your local palliative care team for advice if you would like to know more about your treatment and the type of resources available in your area. Your local service will provide information on the resources available. Some services may require a referral by your doctor to formally admit you while other services can accept a referral from yourself or a family member or friend, local community health centres and local hospitals.

For information about local palliative care services, please see our directory of NSW Palliative Care Service Providers.

Sometimes people die without the benefit of palliative care because their doctor, their family or indeed, they themselves are reluctant to admit there is no cure for their disease. Sometimes people are afraid that referral to palliative care will hasten their death. Discussing these concerns with a member of your local palliative care service will help put your mind at ease.