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# Caring Well

## Public Guide to Hospice & Palliative Care



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This short guide explains the important details about hospice and palliative care and gives helpful tools to support you or someone you care about during a serious illness.

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This guide was put together in July 2025 and was updated in June 2026 by the communications team at the National Partnership for Healthcare and Hospice Innovation (NPHI). It is based on publicly available information and the subject matter expertise of members from across the NPHI network.



.01

# What is *hospice*?

Hospice is a type of care for people with a serious illness that won't get better. It helps with pain, symptoms, and stress so the person can feel as comfortable as possible.

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**Hospice also supports families  
& friends of patients too!**







## *Help that puts you first*

Hospice care focuses on comfort and support. It's about what matters most to the person — what they want, what they care about, and helping them live as well as possible, not just treating their illness.

**It's not about finding a cure; it's about giving care that feels right and matches the patient's wishes.**



# What hospice includes

03.

Hospice care is different from other types of health care because it helps with your body, mind, and spirit, not just your illness. We call this *holistic* care.

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## Medical Care & Symptom Management

- ▶ Pain and other symptoms are eased to suit each person
- ▶ Support for physical comfort and mobility
- ▶ Medications related to symptom control

## Family, Patient & Caregiver Support

- ▶ Education, respite care, and 24/7 on-call help are part of hospice to ease the burden on loved ones
- ▶ Hospice aides help with bathing, dressing, eating, and other daily needs

## Emotional & Spiritual Support

- ▶ Counseling, spiritual care, and therapy for patients
- ▶ Grief and bereavement services for families

**And so much more!**

# The hospice care team

04.

Hospice care is a team effort that supports the whole person and their loved ones. Each team member has a special role to help give care that is complete, caring, and based on what the patient needs and values.



## **Social Worker**

Helps with emotional support, family relationships, planning for future care, and connecting patients with helpful resources in their community.



## **Hospice Nurse**

Helps manage daily medical care, keeps track of symptoms and comfort, and is the main point of contact for the family.



## **Hospice Aide (CNA or HHA)**

Gives personal care like bathing, grooming, and light help to support the patient's comfort and dignity.



## **Volunteers**

Trained helpers who spend time with patients, run errands, or give caregivers a break. They're an important part of the caring support hospice provides.



## **Physician/Medical Director**

Leads the patient's care plan, works with the hospice team, and makes sure the care matches the patient's goals and health needs.



## **Grief & Bereavement Counselors**

Helps families before and after a loved one passes away, giving support as they cope and begin to heal during a hard time.

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# Some myths about hospice

05.

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**Myth #1: Hospice is only for the last few days of life.**

**Fact:** Hospice can support patients for several months before a person passes away. Getting care earlier can bring more comfort, support, and peace of mind.

**Myth #2: Hospice is only for older adults.**

**Fact:** Hospice care is for people of all ages, even children, who have a serious illness.

**Myth #3: You can't receive any medical care in hospice.**

**Fact:** Patients in hospice still get medicine, equipment, and medical help to manage pain and feel more comfortable.

**Myth #4: Hospice is a physical place**

**Fact:** Most hospice care happens at home, wherever "home" is, with support for both the patient and their family.

**Myth #5: Families are left to figure everything out on their own.**

**Fact:** Hospice also supports families with emotional, spiritual, and practical help. This includes 24/7 support, grief counseling, and advice for caregivers that continues after their loved one has passed away.



# What is *palliative Care?*



Palliative care can  
start early, even at  
the time of diagnosis



Palliative care is special type of  
medical care that focuses on relieving  
symptoms, stress, and improving  
quality of life for people with serious  
illnesses — **at any age or stage.**



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07

## Care for mind & body

Palliative care can be given at any time during a serious illness, even if the person is still getting treatment to try to get better. A team of doctors, nurses, social workers, and others work together to care for the whole person — not just their illness.

**This kind of care helps people feel more comfortable, learn about their choices, and live as well as they can. It also gives extra support to patients and families when they need it most.**

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# What palliative care includes

08.

Palliative care can be provided at any age, at any stage, and alongside treatment to get better from an illness.

## Emotional & Mental Health Support

▶ Counseling, coping strategies, and stress reduction for patients and families

## Symptom Management

▶ Relief from pain, discomfort, and other distressing symptoms

## Care Planning & Communication

▶ Help with making medical decisions that reflect the patient's goals and values

## Family & Caregiver Support

▶ Guidance, resources, and emotional support for loved ones

## Flexible Settings

▶ Care provided in hospitals, clinics, long-term care, or at home

**And so much more!**

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# The palliative care team

09.

Palliative care is delivered by a team of professionals who work together to provide whole-person support.



## **Social Worker**

Helps with emotional support, planning for future care, and finding helpful resources in the community.



## **Nurse or Nurse Practitioner**

Helps manage care, checks on comfort, relieves symptoms, and keeps communication going with the care team.



## **Other Specialists (as needed)**

Pharmacists, nutritionists, rehab therapists, and others may help based on what the patient needs.



## **Chaplain or Spiritual Counselor**

Gives spiritual support and helps patients and families find meaning and peace during their care.



## **Palliative Care Doctor**

Leads the care team, helps with tough medical symptoms, and makes sure treatment matches the patient's goals.

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Hospice and palliative care are  
about living well: *on your own terms*  
with the support you *need.*



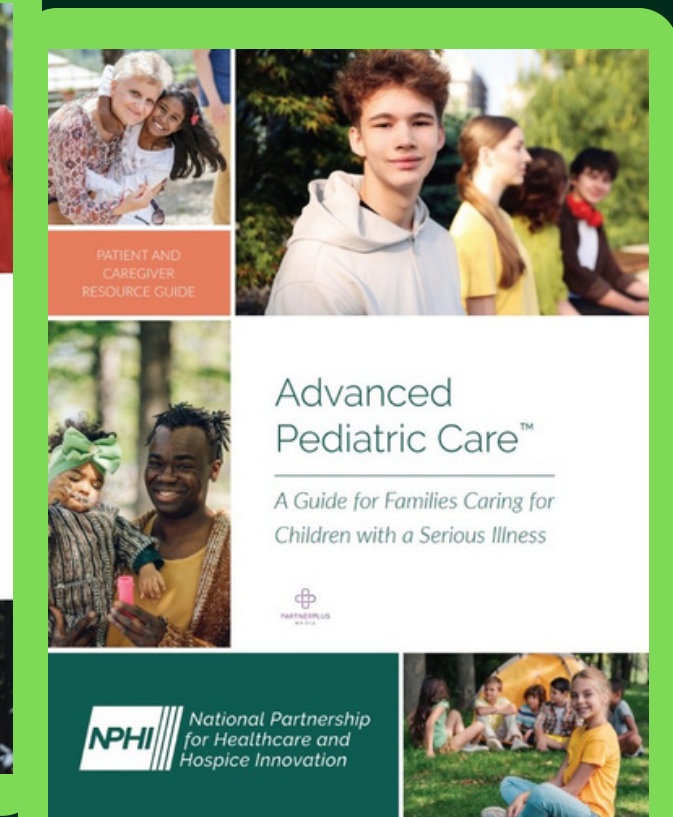
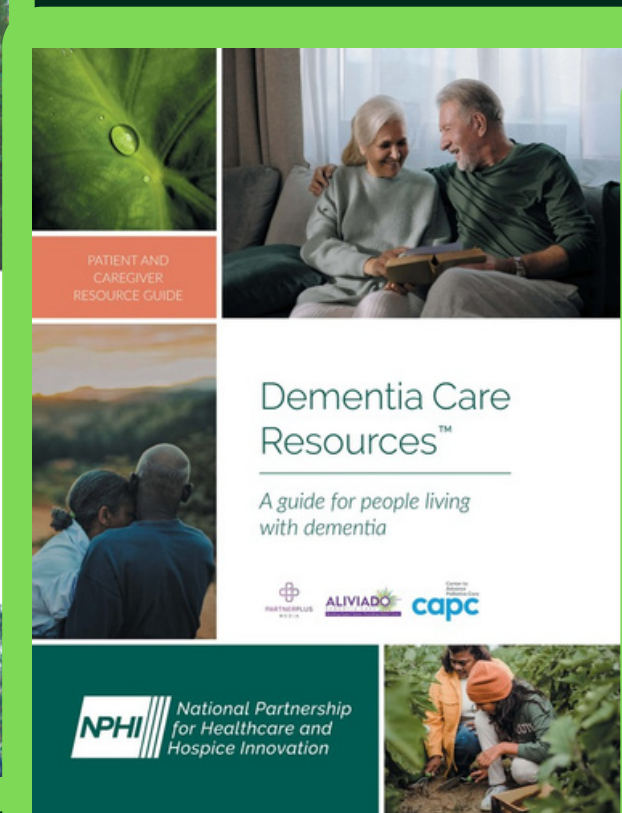
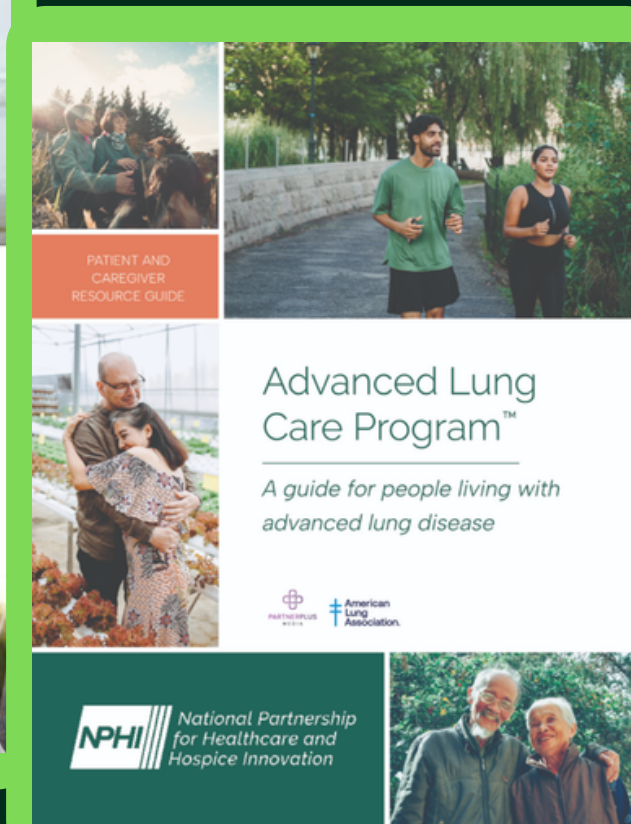
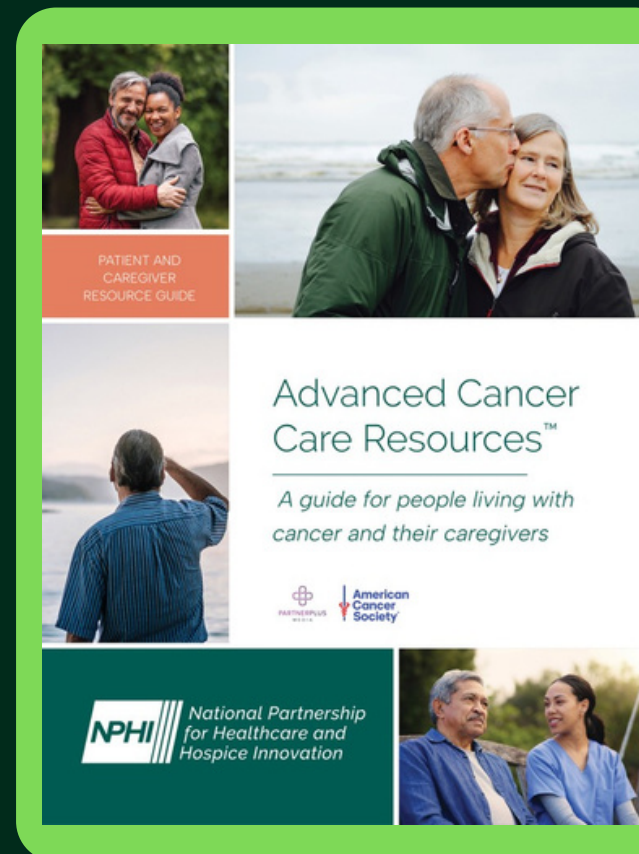


# Care Resources

Looking for helpful guides to care for yourself or a loved one?

Our patient & caregiver resource guides are there to help you get the best care and advice right from the comfort of home.

Get Resources

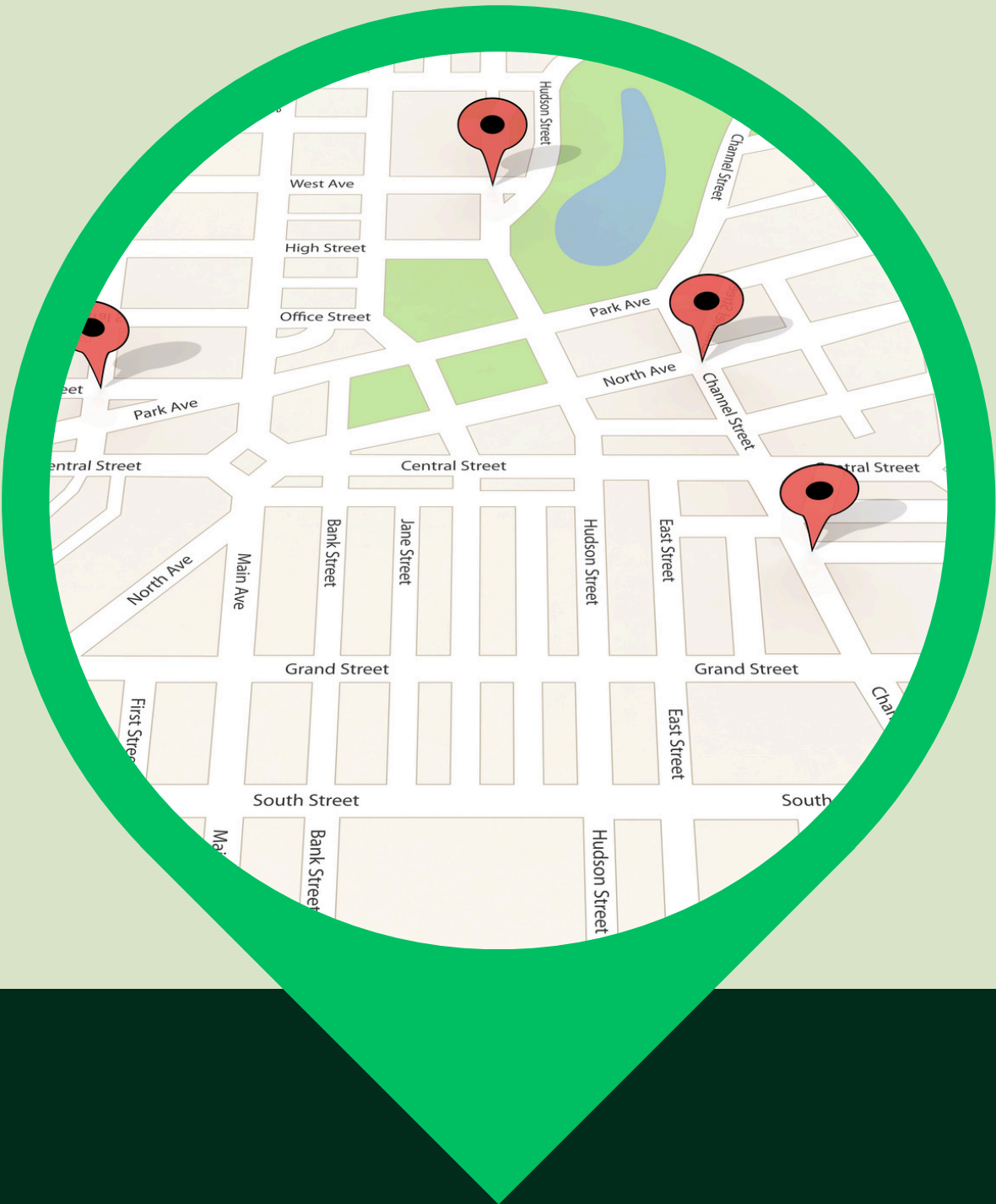






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