

# Understanding Hospice



Hospice is comprehensive end of life care. Not to be feared, it is rooted in the centuries old idea of offering hospitality to those on a long journey. Patients do not go home to die; they go home to live until they die. Hospice is simply there to guide the way, bringing quality to life when every moment is important.

To make a patient referral call toll-free:

**1.800.757.3326**

[www.northernlighthealth.org/HCAAtHome](http://www.northernlighthealth.org/HCAAtHome)

**Hospice, a program for individuals and families, provides support for people entering the final stages of life. The hospice team consists of the patient's physician, the hospice physician, nurses, social workers, home health aides, spiritual counselors, volunteers, and bereavement coordinators.**

Hospice affirms life. It does not hasten or postpone death. The idea is to enhance the quality of a person's remaining time by making the dying process as comfortable as possible.

#### **The inter-disciplinary hospice team:**

- Manages the patient's pain and symptoms
- Assists the patient with the emotional, psychosocial and spiritual aspects of dying
- Provides needed medication, medical supplies and equipment
- Teaches the family how to care for the patient
- Delivers special services like speech, physical, and occupational therapy when needed
- Makes short-term inpatient care available when pain or symptoms become too difficult, or caregiver needs some respite time
- Provides bereavement counseling to surviving family and friends

#### **Who is eligible?**

A patient with a terminal illness who has decided to stop curative treatment. The initiation of hospice requires a referral from a doctor certifying that the person has been diagnosed with a disease or illness that, if it ran its normal course, would result in a prognosis of six months or less to live. That doesn't limit patients to six months of care, however. Hospice care can continue as long as the illness is terminal.

#### **What does it cost?**

Medicare, Mainecare and most insurance companies cover the cost. At Northern Light Home Care & Hospice, services are provided regardless of the ability to pay.

#### **What to expect:**

Hospice begins with a visit from a clinician, who meets with the patient and the family to put together a care plan that fits the patient's values and needs. The patient and the family are considered the unit of care, as the family needs support throughout this unfamiliar and stressful process. Hospice does not replace the primary caregiver; it provides an extra set of skilled hands. Trained volunteers visit or provide a needed break for the caregiver.

Grief counseling and support for loved ones continues for 13 months or longer following death.

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