

What is Palliative Care?

Palliative Care focuses on relief of complex physical, psychological, social or spiritual problems related to life-limiting, terminal or irreversible illness.

THE GOALS OF PALLIATIVE CARE ARE:

- to improve physical, psychosocial and spiritual symptoms associated with advanced illness
- to help the patient and loved ones cope with changes through the stages of illness
- to help determine prognosis and plan for the future (advance care planning)

Palliative Care services may be provided simultaneously with all other medical treatment, including life-sustaining treatments. Although Palliative Care may sometimes serve as a bridge to hospice, Palliative Care is not itself a hospice. If a patient is ready for hospice enrollment, the social work department can help contact a hospice agency directly.

Who is eligible for Palliative Care?

Any patient with a life-limiting illness is potentially eligible for assistance. The patient may or may not be considered terminally or irreversibly ill.

APPROPRIATE CONSULTS INCLUDE:

- help with complex decision-making regarding goals of care
- unacceptable pain or other symptoms unrelieved by the primary team
- uncontrolled psychosocial or spiritual distress
- frequent hospitalizations or trips to the emergency department within the past 30 to 60 days
- prolonged stay in the intensive care unit (ICU) without evidence of overall improvement

What services are provided through Palliative Care consultation?

- Assistance with the management of physical symptoms such as pain, shortness of breath, nausea and fatigue.
- Assistance with the management of depression, grief and anxiety.
- Emotional, psychological and spiritual support for the patient, family and primary care team.
- Counseling related to prognosis and decisions near the end of life.
- Assistance with advance care planning such as living wills and the designation of decision makers.
- Assistance in coordination of care with home care, extended-care facilities or hospice care.
- Grief counseling and bereavement support.

How may I access these services?

A physician may write an order for a Palliative Care consult.

To learn how you can make a gift to support the Palliative Care Consult Service program, please contact Baylor Health Care System Foundation at (214) 820-7775.