

Hospice Care: When is the Right Time?



How do we each picture the end of life? What do we want? Most people say they want to die at home, surrounded by loved ones. Few choose to die in an ICU with noises and invasive activity. Most people say they want to make peace with life and loved ones, be comfortable, and be in control of their health.

Making best days possible

As explained by Dr. Atul Gawande, who told his own family's story in *Being Mortal*, "People want to share memories, pass on wisdom and keepsakes, settle relationships, establish their legacies, make peace with God, and ensure that those who are left behind will be okay. They want to end their stories on their own terms." Choosing hospice care at the right time can give loved ones their best possible day, however they might define it under the circumstances, he says.

Yet without planning, these wishes are not always granted. When a life-limiting illness arises, this is a good time for you and your family to have some honest conversations about hospice care.

The family conversation

The Conversation Project National Survey tells us that 90% of people say that talking with their loved ones about end-of-life care is important. Yet only 27% have actually done so. And many families wait too long to talk about the option of hospice care.

Hospice care is appropriate for someone who has been diagnosed with a terminal illness and has decided not to pursue curative treatment. This makes care more important than ever—care for managing symptoms like pain, care for the challenges of the end-of-life journey, spiritual care, and attention to the whole person and the whole family to make best days possible.



Experts at Stanford School of Medicine tell us too few people take advantage of the benefits of hospice care. **And most families wait too long to start.**

How hospice care helps

The team of hospice caregivers from VNA Hospice is on a mission to make best days possible. They attend to every aspect of patients' and families' needs, with a focus on providing comfort. Hospice care delivers important benefits:

- + The freedom to choose your care
- + Access to support every day
- + Fewer emergency trips to the hospital
- + The freedom to spend your final months and days at home, with family members close by
- + Holistic support team that addresses psychological, spiritual, and medical needs with expert care

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making best days possible.

Serving Jasper, Lake, LaPorte, Newton, Porter, & Starke counties

Take this quiz: Signs Hospice Care would help



The end of life is a journey, and there are many steps along the way. Hospice caregivers provide comfort and care throughout the journey. Try this simple quiz to see whether hospice care might be a fit for your family. Check any statements that apply to your loved one approaching the end of life.

1. I want to increase my understanding and acceptance of a terminal diagnosis.
2. I want to choose what matters to me.
3. My top priority is not curing my illness, but being as comfortable as possible.
4. I prefer to experience the end of life in a familiar environment.
5. I want family members, grandchildren, and/or beloved pets nearby.
6. I'm experiencing symptoms that diminish quality of living, such as pain or shortness of breath.
7. I'm experiencing uncomfortable anxiety, agitation, or depression.
8. I'm struggling to find peace.
9. I'm working with a caregiver (family or friend) who is feeling overwhelmed or over-tired—or is not sure what to do.
10. I have been making frequent trips to the ER or hospital.
11. I'm feeling a loss of control in the dying process.
12. I'm seeking comfort from people who understand.

Scoring: Count 1 point for every statement you checked. If you checked:

- + **1-4 answers:** There are concerns here, and hospice professionals could help you set the stage. This is a good time to begin connecting with care that can help you avert crisis.
- + **5-7 answers:** The end-of-life journey is taking a toll. There are indications here that better days are possible, and hospice care could provide some relief.
- + **8-12 answers:** You are definitely not alone in these experiences. The hospice team at VNA is just a phone call away. We'd like to help you make best days possible.

Hospice is a positive, proactive choice that's not about giving up; it's about taking control of your experience. The earlier you have the conversation, the more support you will receive. Not sure it's time? The team at VNA Hospice is happy to talk with you about your own situation and be available to you at the right time. How you and your family guide the end of life experience is your choice. We're here to listen. We're here to help. Call VNA Hospice NWI at (219) 462-5195.

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