

Frequently asked questions about palliative medicine

What happens when my physician asks the Palliative Medicine Service staff to see me?

Our first meeting is usually an opportunity for us to get to know one another. If there are physical symptoms that need our attention right away to make you comfortable, we will address those first. As we work with you, we'll help you and your family set goals you would like to reach, whether or not you are getting treatment. Examples of goals include better control of pain, being able to breathe easier, filling out a living will or advance directive, or reducing depression. If you are under treatment, we will help you understand the purpose of that treatment so you know what to expect and can plan for the future.

Does an order for palliative medicine mean I am dying? Isn't it the same as hospice?

No. Palliative medicine is for anyone dealing with difficult medical issues. These issues cause physical and emotional distress, and often involve making hard decisions about treatment and care. Palliative medicine is here to help you understand your choices and to support you and your family. Research shows that working with palliative care can help people live longer. Palliative medicine can, in the case of late or advanced disease, help people move into a hospice program. However, hospice starts only if a person is expected to live for 6 months or less and has decided to stop active treatment for disease.

Do medical treatments stop if I work with palliative medicine?

No. Many of the people we work with continue to receive treatment, such as chemotherapy or radiation for cancer, cardiac procedures such as angiography or pacemakers, and surgery. You can enroll in clinical trials that offer experimental approaches for your disease, if available. We can also help you consider your options when treatment decisions seem to be overwhelming.

What if I need more than symptom management? Does palliative medicine work with the hospital's other services?

Palliative medicine is an interdisciplinary team made up of many healthcare professionals. Our team includes a physician, nurse practitioner, nurse coordinator and educator, social worker, pharmacists, and chaplains. We recognize that spiritual health is an important aspect in many of our patients' lives. We will contact a chaplain or your own clergy/spiritual leader, at your request. Our social worker can help you find community services and support, as well as act as a counselor for you and your family during hospitalization.

What about the stress my illness seems to cause my family?

Your family is an important part of your wellness. This includes your spouse, parents, children, siblings, and other people you love. By supporting them, we support you.

Will I still work with my regular physician or does palliative medicine take over my medical care?

Your physician will continue to manage your overall care. We will communicate with your physician about recommendations and changes to your care in the hospital.

CONTACT US

PALLIATIVE MEDICINE SERVICE

Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m.–5 p.m.

Call **625-4977** or dial extension 4977

Telephonic support available after hours and weekends.

 Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula®