

Questions to Ask Your Hospice Team

A practical guide for patients, families & caregivers

Starting hospice can bring a great deal of information at once. This guide is designed to help you prepare for conversations with your hospice team, understand the support available to you, and keep important questions in one place.

Understanding the Care Plan

- Who is part of our hospice care team, and what does each person do?
- How often should we expect visits?
- Who should we contact first when we have a question or concern?
- Is someone available 24/7 by phone?
- What changes should we report to you right away?
- When should we call hospice rather than 911?

Comfort & Symptom Management

- What symptoms should we expect as the illness progresses?
- How will pain, anxiety, nausea, agitation, or shortness of breath be managed?
- What medications should we have available in the home?
- If a comfort kit is provided, when and how should each medication be used?
- What should we do if our loved one can no longer swallow medication?
- Who should we call if symptoms are not adequately controlled?

Changes as Death Approaches

- What signs might indicate that death is getting closer?
- How might eating and drinking change?
- What breathing changes might we notice?
- What changes in alertness or communication are common?
- How will we know when our loved one may be actively dying?
- What can we do to help keep them comfortable?

Caregiving at Home

- What equipment or supplies will hospice provide?
- Can you show us how to safely reposition, bathe, or provide personal care?
- What should we do if our loved one falls?
- What respite support is available for caregivers?
- What should we do overnight if something changes?
- Are there tasks we should not attempt ourselves?

Planning Ahead

- Who should have copies of the advance directive or POLST if one is in place?
- Are there decisions we should discuss now before our loved one becomes less responsive?
- Who can help us with questions about funeral homes or final arrangements?
- Are social work, chaplain, or bereavement services available to our family?
- What support is available for children or other family members?

When Death Occurs

- Who do we call first when our loved one dies?
- What will happen when the hospice nurse arrives?
- Is there anything we need to do immediately?
- How much time can we spend with our loved one afterward?
- Who contacts the funeral home or mortuary?
- What happens with medications and hospice equipment?
- What bereavement support is available afterward?

Important Contact Information

Keep your hospice contact information somewhere easy to find.

Hospice organization: _____

24-hour hospice number: _____

Primary nurse / care contact: _____

Questions We Want to Remember

Use this space to write down questions as they come up between visits.

Please note: This resource is intended to help individuals and families prepare for conversations with their hospice care team. It is provided for educational and organizational purposes only and is not a substitute for medical, legal, or other professional advice. Hospice services and procedures vary by provider and individual circumstances. Questions regarding symptoms, medications, treatments, or changes in condition should be directed to your hospice or healthcare team. If you believe there is a medical emergency, seek appropriate emergency assistance.