

Pediatric Palliative Care: Comfort and Support for Children With Cancer and Their Families



When a child is diagnosed with cancer, the whole family is affected. Palliative care focuses on improving quality of life for people with a serious illness like cancer. It provides comfort and support for your child and family.

What is palliative care?

Palliative care is specialized care used alongside cancer treatment to help reduce symptoms like pain and nausea. It can also help ease emotional stress for those affected by cancer. You may hear it called supportive care or symptom management.

Is palliative care the same as hospice care?

No. Hospice care is for people who can't be cured or are at the end of their life. Palliative care can be used at *any* point in your child's care. It can start soon after diagnosis and continue throughout treatment. It may even be used when treatment is working well or after it ends.

How can palliative care help your child and family?

Your child's cancer care team may start palliative care to help manage your child's symptoms and side effects from cancer or its treatment. They may also refer you to a palliative care team for more services.

A palliative care team includes specially trained doctors, nurses, counselors, and other health care providers. They work with your child's cancer care team to support your child. They can also support you and other family members.

A palliative care team focuses on your child's and family's quality of life, priorities, and other concerns. Some ways they can help include:

- Coordinating care across medical specialists
- Setting goals for your child's care
- Helping you make informed decisions about treatment
- Suggesting other therapies that may help your child, such as music, pet, or massage therapy

Is palliative care right for your child and family?

Palliative care may be right for your child if they are having symptoms that interfere with their quality of life, like:

- Pain or discomfort
- Shortness of breath
- Fatigue
- Anxiety or depression
- Poor appetite, nausea, or constipation
- Seizures

Palliative care can help children of any age, at any cancer stage. It is based on their symptoms and needs – not on the prognosis (outlook) for a certain cancer.

How can your family get palliative care?

Ask for it! Your child's cancer care team can tell you about your options.

Most insurance plans cover palliative care. If costs are a concern, a social worker or patient navigator can help you.

Where does a child get palliative care?

Palliative care is often given where your child gets other cancer-related care, such as a hospital, cancer center, or clinic. It can also occur in your home.

What to ask about palliative care

Asking questions can help you understand how palliative care fits into your child's treatment.

Here are some to ask your child's cancer care team:

- How do you think palliative care might help my child?
- What can palliative care offer that's different from the care you can give my child?
- Who would be part of my child's palliative care team?
- Will my insurance cover palliative care?
- How long will my child's palliative care last?
- What will the palliative care team do if my child's symptoms get worse? What if my child's symptoms get better?
- How will I talk with my child's palliative care team?
- How are my family and friends involved in my child's palliative care?
- What decisions do I need to make about my child's care? Can you help me with those decisions?



To learn more about palliative care, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/palliativecare or call us at **1-800-227-2345**.