CHOICES Corner - Hospice Care

The purpose of Hospice care is to provide care to terminally ill people that maximizes comfort by reducing pain and addressing the physical, psychological, social and spiritual needs of the patient. Your hospice doctor and your regular doctor (if you have one) must certify that you're terminally ill (with a life expectancy of 6 months or less). When that determination is made, you make the decision to accept comfort care (palliative care) instead of care to cure your illness. At this time, you sign a statement choosing hospice care instead of other Medicare-covered treatments for your terminal illness and related conditions. If you choose hospice care, you have the right to change your mind and receive treatments for your terminal illness. If you have Medicare A, the cost of hospice care and its many services are covered by Medicare. Hospice care also provides counseling, respite care and practical support to the families. There may be a small co-pay if you utilize the out of home respite benefit and/or if you require a drug not on the formulary.

Medicare-certified hospice care is usually given in your home or other facility where you live, like a nursing home. You can also get hospice care in an inpatient hospice facility. Original Medicare will still pay for covered benefits for any health problems that aren't part of your terminal illness and related conditions, but this is unusual. Once you choose hospice care, your hospice benefit will usually cover everything you need.

The hospice provider will inform you in advance if any services aren't covered. You may have to pay for room and board if you live in a facility (like a nursing home) and choose to get hospice care.

Depending on your terminal illness and related conditions, your hospice team will create a plan of care that can include any or all, of these services:

- Doctors' services.
- Nursing and medical services.
- Durable medical equipment for pain relief and symptom management.
- Medical supplies, like bandages or catheters.
- Drugs for pain management.
- Aide and homemaker services.
- Physical therapy services.
- Occupational therapy services.
- Speech-language pathology services.
- Social services.
- Dietary counseling.

- Spiritual and grief counseling for you and your family.
- Short-term inpatient care for pain and symptom management. This care must be in a Medicare-approved facility, like a hospice facility, hospital, or skilled nursing facility that contracts with the hospice.
- Inpatient respite care
- Any other services Medicare covers to manage your pain and other symptoms related to your terminal illness and related conditions, as your hospice team recommends.

There are somethings that your hospice benefit does not cover:

- **Treatment intended to cure your terminal illness and/or related conditions.** *Talk with your doctor if you're thinking about getting treatment to cure your illness. As a hospice patient, you always have the right to stop hospice care at any time.*

- **Prescription drugs to cure your illness** (rather than for symptom control or pain relief).
- **Care from any hospice provider that wasn't set up by the hospice medical team.**



We are here to help! Contact the CHOICES program and speak to a benefits counselor at 1-800- 994- 9422.