



Hospice care

For a person living with a life-limiting or terminal illness, there may be a time when their GP or family doctor suggests a referral to a hospice service. For many people the mention of hospice may create fear and anxiety. Having information about hospice care and the ways in which it can help you and your loved ones may make this step easier.

What is hospice care?

Hospice provides supportive care to people who are in the final phases of a life-limiting illness, with a focus on comfort and quality of life, rather than cure.

Hospice services are focused on managing pain and other symptoms as well as providing emotional and spiritual support to patients, their families/whānau and carers.

Although services offered may differ from hospice to hospice, they are likely to include:

- medical and nursing care
- social work assistance, counselling and spiritual support
- therapies, including physiotherapy and complementary therapies
- bereavement care
- training and support services for families/whānau and carers

Cost of hospice care

Hospice care and services are provided free of charge.

Hospices' receive the majority of their funding from central government; however, fund-raising plays an important part in keeping services free of charge.

Accessing hospice care

Each hospice has its' own eligibility criteria and referral process. Talk to your GP or care team about whether a referral to hospice would be helpful for yourself or for a loved one. For more information about hospice services in your area, you can go to www.hospice.org.nz

Common myths about hospice care

You need to be a patient in a hospice to benefit from its services

Although, many hospices offer inpatient care, they also have services that help people to be cared for in their homes. Hospice staff can work alongside family doctors and district nurses in the community.

Hospices focus on medical care

Hospice care is a holistic approach, including looking after physical, emotional, spiritual and social needs. A multidisciplinary team which can include doctors, nurses, social workers, counsellors and therapists, cares for not just the person who is dying but their family, whānau and friends.

Once you go into a hospice, you won't leave

Many patients go into a hospice for short stays, to gain better control of their pain and symptoms or, for a few days of respite care, and then return home. Respite care is offered by some hospices so that families/whānau and carers can have a break from their caring roles.

Hospices are available only for cancer patients

While most patients using hospice services will have cancer illnesses, anyone with a life-limiting condition can access their services. This can include those with conditions **such as motor neurone disease, advanced dementia and end-stage kidney, heart or lung disease.**