

### I don't want to be addicted to pain medicine.

It is very rare for people with serious conditions such as heart disease or cancer to get addicted to pain medicines. When used to treat pain, pain medicines improve quality of life. Being addicted means using a drug over and over again despite obvious harm to a person's emotional and physical health and relationships.

### Is it true that pain medicines can have side effects?

Many pain medicines can have side effects. They can make a person feel sleepy, feel sick, or have trouble going to the bathroom. Facility staff will work with residents and their loved ones to help prevent these side effects.

### What if I change my mind about what I want?

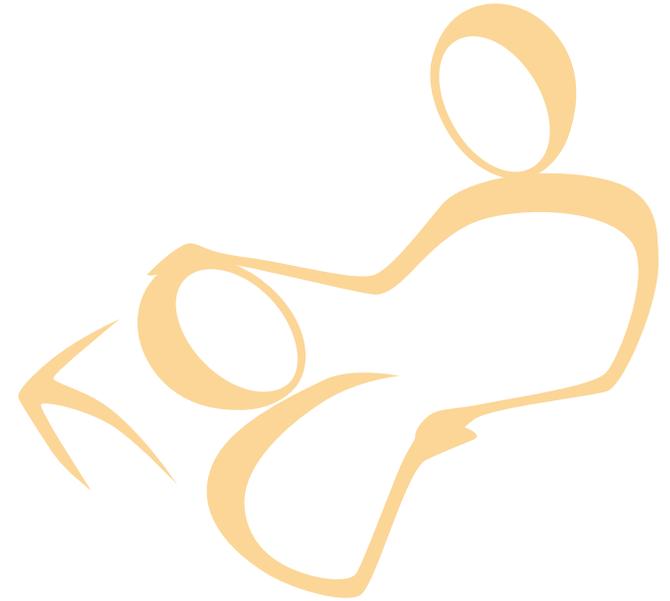
Palliative care is a long-term process to help residents and their loved ones learn about the options for their care. Residents can always decide to change what treatments they get.



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# PALLIATIVE CARE AT A GLANCE

A Guide for Residents  
and Families



New York–Reducing Avoidable Hospitalizations  
[www.nyrah.org](http://www.nyrah.org)

# Answering Residents' and Families' Questions About Palliative Care

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## What is palliative care?

Palliative care helps people with serious illness obtain a full and thorough understanding of their condition and treatment options so they may choose the care they want. Palliative care also focuses on making people who feel sick or have other symptoms such as pain, shortness of breath, constipation, and anxiety feel better.

## Isn't palliative care only for dying people?

Palliative care can help *all* people who have a serious illness by relieving pain, shortness of breath, and other unpleasant symptoms, and by helping residents and their loved ones know more about their medical condition and how it can be treated. While making these symptoms better can be especially important for people with terminal illness, people with all serious illnesses can feel better with palliative care.

## Who can receive palliative care?

Palliative care is for all people who have one or more serious conditions, such as cancer, advanced dementia, stroke, advanced heart or lung disease, kidney failure, and cirrhosis of the liver. Even when a resident or loved one wants every medical treatment available for an illness, palliative care can help residents and loved ones understand their condition and treatment choices, and help them feel better.

## Is palliative care the same as comfort care and hospice care?

No. Palliative care includes many different kinds of care. For some, it can mean helping bad symptoms improve. For others, it can mean using every treatment that is available for an illness. Someone who is very sick, though, may want hospice care or comfort care.

## Is choosing palliative care the same as giving up and doing nothing?

Not at all. Palliative care helps residents choose the care they want, from the most aggressive medical treatment to only providing comfort.

## I want doctors to do everything for my condition, not just palliative care.

Residents can receive all medical treatments while receiving palliative care. Palliative care will help residents and their loved ones know more about the condition and what to expect from different kinds of care. It will also help residents feel better by reducing pain, shortness of breath, constipation, anxiety, and other symptoms.

Palliative care can help all people who have a serious illness by relieving pain, shortness of breath, and other unpleasant symptoms.

## Do I have to refuse life support to get palliative care?

No. Palliative care will help residents and loved ones decide if life support is right for them. Residents and families make the choice about being on life support.

## Can I still get palliative care if I have to go to the hospital?

Yes. More and more hospitals provide palliative care services. Once a resident comes back to a facility, the facility will keep giving them palliative care.

## Does palliative care help with pain?

Yes. One of the most important aspects of palliative care is to prevent and treat pain in people who have serious illness.

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