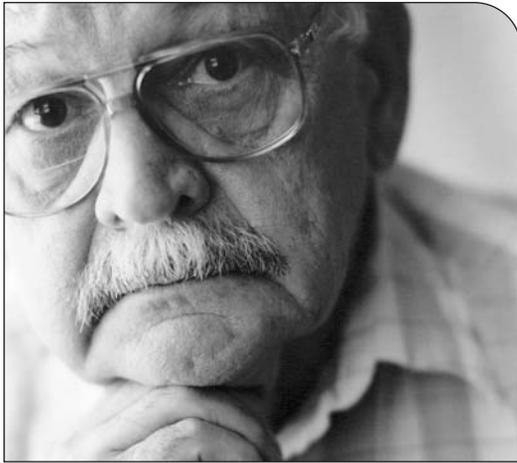


# Considering hospice care



“The doctors have said there’s really nothing more they can do for Uncle Jerry. Should we consider hospice care?”

## START HERE

**Hospice Care** is a special way of caring for people who are terminally ill—and helping their families cope. The goal of hospice is to provide end-of-life care, not to cure the illness. This care includes treatment to relieve symptoms and keep the individual comfortable. It includes medical care, nursing care, social services, drugs for the terminal and related conditions, durable medical equipment, and other types of items and services.

Call your **Regional Home Health Intermediary (RHHI)** for more information about Medicare hospice benefits. A RHHI is a private company that contracts with Medicare to pay bills and check on the quality of hospice and **home health care**. Your State Hospice Organization can also help you locate hospice care.

To get local telephone numbers for your RHHI or State Hospice Organization, call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048.

## BASIC INFORMATION

Medicare’s hospice benefit provides for support and comfort to terminally ill patients—including services not usually paid for by Medicare. To be eligible for hospice care, the patient must have **Medicare Part A** and

- the doctor and hospice medical director must certify that the patient is terminally ill and has probably six months or less to live.
- the patient must sign a statement choosing hospice care instead of routine Medicare-covered benefits for their terminal illness.
- the patient must receive care from a Medicare-approved hospice program.

Be aware that Medicare hospice benefits don’t include treatment to cure terminal illness. If the patient’s health improves or the illness goes into remission, he or she always has the right to stop getting hospice care and go back to the regular Medicare health plan. A hospice patient will continue to have Medicare benefits to help pay for treatment of conditions unrelated to the terminal illness.

To find a hospice program, call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) or your State Hospice Organization in the blue pages of your telephone book. Medicare requires the hospice agency and hospice team you choose to provide care.

## FIND OUT MORE

### [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov)

Get a free copy of “Medicare Hospice Benefits.” Under “Search Tools,” select “Find a Medicare Publication.”

### [www.nhpco.org](http://www.nhpco.org)

Information on hospice programs across the United States from the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization.

### [www.hospiceinfo.org](http://www.hospiceinfo.org)

Free booklets: “Hospice Care & The Medicare Hospice Benefit” and “Hospice Care: A Consumer’s Guide to Selecting a Hospice Program” from the National Hospice Foundation.

### [www.hospice-america.org](http://www.hospice-america.org)

Information from the Hospice Association of America. This organization represents hospices, caregivers, and volunteers serving terminally ill patients and their families.

# HOSPICE CARE

Most hospice patients get hospice care in the comfort of their home and with their families. Depending on the patient’s condition, hospice care also may be given in a Medicare-approved hospice facility, hospital, or nursing home. Hospice volunteers are available to do household chores, provide companionship, and offer support to the patient and family.

Medicare pays for inpatient **respite care** (short-term care for hospice patients) so that the usual caregiver can rest.

## CONSIDER THESE QUESTIONS WHEN SELECTING HOSPICE CARE PROVIDERS



- Does the hospice provider train caregivers to care for the patient at home?
- How will the patient’s doctor work with the doctor in the hospice program?
- How many other patients are assigned to the hospice care staff?
- Does the hospice staff meet regularly with the patient and family to discuss care?
- How does the hospice staff respond to after hour emergencies?
- What measures are in place to ensure hospice care quality?
- What services do hospice volunteers offer? Are they trained?
- Is the hospice program certified and licensed by the state or federal government?

### Snapshot of Original Medicare Plan Coverage for Hospice Care

		Medicare Helps Pay	Medicare Doesn't Pay
<b>Medical Care</b>	Doctor's Services	●	
	Skilled Nursing	●	
	Curative Treatments for Terminal Illness		○
<b>Support Care</b>	Homemaker Services	●	
	Home Health Aide	●	
	Short-Term Hospital Care Including Respite Care	●	
<b>Therapy</b>	Physical Therapy	●	
	Occupational Therapy	●	
	Speech-Language Therapy	●	
	Dietary Counseling	●	
	Counseling for Patient and Family	●	
<b>Drugs</b>	Symptom Control (except copayments up to \$5)	●	
	Pain Relief (except copayments up to \$5)	●	
<b>Medical Supplies</b>	Wheelchairs or Walkers	●	
	Wound Dressings	●	

Certain conditions will apply.