Palliative Medicine Clinic
What is outpatient palliative care?

Palliative care is specialized medical care that focuses on providing patients relief from pain and other symptoms of a serious illness, no matter the diagnosis or stage of disease. Palliative care teams aim to improve the quality of life for patients and their families. This form of care is offered alongside curative or other treatments a patient may be receiving.

Palliative care is provided by a team of doctors, nurses, social workers, chaplains and other specialists. They work with the patient, their family and the other doctors to provide an extra layer of support that complements ongoing care.

How does palliative care help?

We can help the patient and their family members:

• Learn more about the disease
• Plan for advance care
• Make decisions
• Receive emotional support
• Receive spiritual support
• Get referrals to community agencies
How you prepare

Here’s some information to help you get ready for your first consultation appointment.

• Bring a list of symptoms you’re experiencing. Note specifically what makes the symptoms better or worse and whether they affect your ability to go about your daily activities.
• Bring a list of medications and supplements you use.
• Consider bringing a family member or friend with you to the appointment.
• Bring any advance directives and living wills you’ve completed.

Why is it done?

Palliative care may be offered to people of any age who have a serious or life-threatening illness. It can help adults and children living with illnesses such as:

• Cancer
• Blood and bone marrow disorders requiring stem cell transplant
• Heart disease
• Cystic fibrosis
• Dementia
• End-stage liver disease
• Kidney failure
• Lung disease
• Parkinson’s disease
• Stroke
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Symptoms that may be improved by palliative care include:

• Pain
• Nausea or vomiting
• Anxiety or nervousness
• Depression or sadness
• Constipation
• Difficulty breathing
• Anorexia
• Fatigue
• Trouble sleeping
What you can expect

Palliative care is an approach to care that you may want to access at any stage of a serious illness. It helps you manage symptoms and address concerns that matter most to you. You may consider palliative care when you have questions about:

- What to expect with your care plan and how to tailor it to what matters most to you
- What programs and resources are available to support you throughout your illness
- Your treatment options and their pros and cons
- Making decisions in line with your personal values and goals

Your first meeting may take place while you’re in the hospital or in an outpatient clinic. Research indicates that early use of palliative care services can improve the quality of life for patients with serious illness, decrease depression and anxiety, increase patient and family satisfaction with care, and, in some cases, extend survival.

During the consultation

Your palliative care team will talk with you about your symptoms, current treatments, and how this illness is affecting you and your family. You and your palliative care team make a plan to prevent and ease suffering and improve your daily life. This plan will be carried out in coordination with your primary care team in a way that works well with any other treatment you’re receiving.

After the consultation

Your palliative care plan is designed to fit your life and needs. It may include elements such as:

- Symptom management
- Support and advice
- Care techniques that improve your comfort and sense of well-being
- Referrals
- Advance care planning

Your palliative care team collaborates with your regular doctors to ensure your care is well coordinated.
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