



General Information about Hospice

How do I find one near me?

First, ask for a recommendation; your physician, your friends and family who have used a local hospice. You can ask for more than one organization and even have more than one come to provide an “informational visit” to allow you to ask questions and to compare services. You can ask your insurance provider—or Medicare—who they have contracted with.

Then use the [California Hospice & Palliative Care Association](#) search page.

What should I look for in the hospice?

Questions to ask:

- Do I want a not-for-profit or for-profit organization or does that matter to me?
- Do they have trained volunteers?
- Do they have services, resources to help me talk to my family, to my young children?
- Do they have complimentary therapy such as massage, aromatherapy, reiki, healing touch, pet therapy programs?
- What kind of bereavement help do they have? Calls, visits, and groups of the type you need/want. Referrals if needed.
- Are their groups led by volunteers or professionals?
- Do they serve children as patients?
- After hours support may vary, so how fast are they in responding?
- Are physicians available for home visits if needed?
- What is usual frequency of nursing visits?

How do I talk this over with my doctor?

When your doctor has informed you that they have exhausted all curative and or life prolonging treatments and presents you with a change in goals for care and treatment—this is an indicator that you may benefit from the support of hospice care. You can ask about how your pain will be managed, what you can expect in your situation. You can ask what do you need to do next.

How do I talk this over with my loved ones?

Your physician may be willing to have your spouse and/or immediate family come in to meet and discuss your care and your needs. The hospice may have a social

worker who can meet with you and family to do this as well or depending on care setting you may have access to a team conference with your family. There are many key people involved in summarizing and planning for your needs, in explaining your options, and in helping you understand your situation.

Hospice and pain relief: What you should know:

There are safe and well studied approaches to pain management.

California has laws that require the continuing education of physicians in pain management. This supports better care for people facing end stage disease management and in disease treatment. There are safe medications that when properly administered, closely monitored especially when hospice is involved at home, the patient can be well managed and not over sedated. Patients can set a goal for acceptable level of pain (0-10 scale used) and medical providers can find the balance between comfort and wakefulness.

Occasionally as a disease progresses and consciousness fades, the person sleeps more—not a result of pain medication. Even using strong medicine can be safe and easy. Hospice does not endorse the hastening of death in any intentional fashion so it is an important discussion to have with your care providers to reassure you of this basic value. It is important that your [advanced health care directive, and/or durable power of attorney](#) is completed to note your beliefs and values as a Catholic.

Advocating for your wishes as a Catholic when being cared for by a hospice

You have the right and for many, the need to have access to Catholic clergy for prayer, sacramental support, and funeral planning. The hospice team can work with you to coordinate the parish support you need, make contact, make a reconnection with you. You can also ask the hospice team for a Catholic chaplain from the hospice.