

# Learning about Palliative and End-of-Life Care

People can live for many years with a chronic disease. Palliative and end-of-life care gives extra support at all stages of a chronic illness, not just near the end-of-life. This type of care works with people's family doctor and specialist as they're being treated for chronic illness. It helps to give people the best quality of life possible so people and their families can live a more settled and peaceful life.

## How specialized care teams help

Living with a chronic disease can be harder some days than others. People may need to be in the hospital for a short time, and it can be tough on people and their caregivers. Sometimes medicine can help treat a chronic disease, and sometimes other therapies are a better choice.

Palliative and end-of-life focuses on people's comfort, no matter what health problems a disease may cause. Care teams work to:

- treat symptoms using medicine and other therapies
- help people feel more positive
- help with fears and anxiety
- show what community supports are out there
- teach about care options
- make sure all caregivers know what the person wants and needs
- explain how the health care system works



## Care options

In Alberta, you have many options for where to get palliative and end-of-life care – your home, a hospital, a continuing care centre, or a hospice. Talk to your family and your health care team about what's important to you and where you'd like to be at this time in your illness. Your choice may change as your illness changes, and you can get palliative and end-of-life care at any time.



### Home

Many people choose to stay in their own homes to get palliative and end-of-life care from a home care program. Being in a familiar place, close to loved ones, can help you live as normally as possible. Home care programs offer nursing care and other home support services, such as:

- volunteer services
- community day programs for you
- care to manage your pain and symptoms
- teams to help with urgent needs 24/7
- interdisciplinary care such as support with finances, rehabilitation

There's also a program that's helping to bring emergency care to people who get palliative and end-of-life care in their homes. The [EMS Assess, Treat, Refer program](#) has Emergency Medical Services, home care clinicians, doctors, and families working together to help people stay in their homes if that's what they wish.

### Hospitals

In a hospital, care is often given by a team of doctors, nurses, and other health care providers. The team has access to expert palliative care consultants or palliative doctors. Some hospitals have palliative and end-of-life care units, and others set aside beds in different units.

### Continuing care centres

You can get palliative and end-of-life care services in continuing care centres, like long-term care and supportive living facilities. The type of facility you choose depends on:

- the lifestyle you want
- the care you need
- how much you can do for yourself

If you're in one of these facilities and you need specialized palliative care services, you may need to

stay in a hospital for a short time.

### Hospices

Alberta has many hospices. These places are made to feel like home while giving specialized end-of-life care, 24/7. The care teams focus on your comfort and quality of life and can help you and your family cope with your feelings about serious illness. In a hospice, you're cared for by health care professionals. Availability of other professionals such as spiritual counsellors and other services such as volunteers may be different for each hospice.

For more information about end-of-life care, go to [myhealth.alberta.ca/palliative-care/resources](https://myhealth.alberta.ca/palliative-care/resources).

## Wellness Articles

Alberta Health Services encourages all Albertans to live a healthy life. These weekly Wellness Articles are created by a team of healthcare professionals from AHS in collaboration with provincial healthcare experts in Alberta and content from [myhealth.alberta.ca](https://myhealth.alberta.ca). Our experts ensure this information is factual, current, and written for Albertans.

From stress-relief strategies to finding balance within your life, these Wellness Articles cover a variety of different topics designed to inspire and educate Albertans on creating a positive and healthy lifestyle.

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