



# It's time to call VITAS

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When it's time  
to focus on you—  
not on your disease.

Innovative  
Hospice Care®  
**VITAS**®

Most terminally ill people wish to be comfortable and at home during their last months, surrounded by family and friends. However, many wait too long to contact a hospice provider, despite abundant evidence showing that early hospice care can greatly improve the quality of life for both patients and their loved ones:

- According to a Gallup poll, nine out of 10 Americans say they would prefer to be cared for in their own home or a family member's home if they were terminally ill and had six months to live.<sup>1</sup>
- In the same year, research published in the *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management* found that Medicare beneficiaries who opted for end-of-life hospice care lived, on average, 29 days longer than similar patients who did not take advantage of hospice.<sup>2</sup>
- VITAS Innovative Hospice Care® patient surveys indicate that 99 percent of families wish they had known about hospice sooner.<sup>3</sup>



## Why hospice? Why now?

Initial efforts to treat a disease are often focused on achieving remission or even a cure. But as a terminal illness progresses, the side effects and intensity of the treatment can sometimes outweigh any expected benefits. This is the point at which hospice care can do the most good—controlling pain, managing symptoms, facilitating comfort and addressing spiritual needs.

Hospice is not about losing hope, giving up and dying. By taking advantage of the care that an experienced hospice team provides, the focus becomes *maximizing quality of life*. As a patient's health declines and his or her care needs increase, hospice can address these needs by taking a gradual, non-crisis approach. This results in a less stressful experience for patients and families.

## When to begin hospice care

Experts agree that hospice care is most beneficial when it is provided for months, rather than weeks or days. Patients and families can benefit from considering hospice care as soon as it is appropriate, allowing them to receive the full range of benefits.

Your doctor can help determine when the time is right to begin hospice care, but here are some symptoms to watch for:

- Unrelieved pain
- Frequent infections
- Repeat hospitalizations
- Weight loss/difficulty swallowing

- Inability to move about on your own
- Nausea/vomiting
- Shortness of breath/oxygen dependence
- The burden of current therapies outweighing the benefits

When symptoms like these appear in conjunction with a life-limiting illness, ask your physician to consider referring you to hospice.

VITAS Innovative Hospice Care® provides comprehensive and compassionate end-of-life care aimed at controlling symptoms and preserving dignity. Our interdisciplinary approach provides complete care that addresses the physical and emotional needs of patients and their families.

## You can keep your own doctor

Although a hospice physician is part of the VITAS team, your personal doctor can continue to be involved in your care. In fact, we welcome the participation of primary care physicians in managing your care.

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<sup>1</sup> National Hospice Organization-commissioned Gallup poll, 1992.

<sup>2</sup> Connor SR, Pyenson B, Fitch K, Spence C, Iwasaki K. Comparing hospice and nonhospice patient survival among patients who die within a three-year window. *J Pain Symptom Manage.* 2007 Mar;33(3):238-46.

<sup>3</sup> Data on file at VITAS.



## Care for the body, mind and spirit

At VITAS Innovative Hospice Care®, your hospice team will include the following:

- Physician
- Registered nurse
- Social worker
- Hospice aide
- Chaplain
- Community volunteer
- Bereavement specialist

## VITAS provides all four levels of hospice care

The VITAS Innovative Hospice Care® team provides unsurpassed service for all four levels of hospice as defined by Medicare:

- Routine home care
- Intensive Comfort Care®
- Inpatient care
- Respite care

If you or a loved one is battling a life-limiting illness, consider benefiting from VITAS hospice care now.



## What to do next

If you or a loved one is battling a life-limiting illness, consider benefiting from VITAS hospice care now. Contact VITAS Innovative Hospice Care® at 1.800.93.VITAS for more information on the many ways we can help or to schedule a meeting with one of our representatives.

## Who pays for hospice?

There is no need to defer hospice care due to financial concerns. The Medicare Hospice Benefit covers 100 percent of the cost of care related to the terminal illness. In most states, Medicaid also provides hospice coverage, as do most private insurance plans. Coverage includes everything involved in hospice care, from nurse and physician visits to therapy, medication and more.

Referrals: 800.93.VITAS  
VITAS.com

