How Can Palliative Care Help Me?

What Is Palliative Care?
Palliative care is specialized medical care for people living with a serious illness. It focuses on providing relief from the symptoms and stress of the illness. The goal of palliative care is to improve quality of life for a patient and their family. Palliative care is provided by a specially trained team of doctors, nurses, and other specialists who work together with a patient’s other doctors to provide extra support. Palliative care is based on the needs of the patient, not on how long someone is expected to live. It is appropriate at any age and any stage of serious illness, and it can be provided alongside treatment for illness. Palliative care is not the same as hospice care. Hospice care is also focused on helping patients and their families feel better, but is specifically for patients who are in the last months of life.

Who Benefits From Palliative Care?
Palliative care can benefit people with any serious illness that affects quality of life. Some examples include people with cancer experiencing pain, nausea, or weight loss; people with lung disease or heart disease who feel short of breath; people with worsening neurologic diseases such as Alzheimer disease or Parkinson disease; or people experiencing difficulty with physical or cognitive functioning from any disease. Palliative care can also assist families and caregivers of people living with serious illness. Studies have shown that palliative care can substantially improve quality of life, symptoms, and satisfaction with care.

What Are the Benefits of Palliative Care?
Palliative care can improve your quality of life while getting treatment for a serious illness. Palliative care teams offer expert management of physical and emotional symptoms, including pain, depression, anxiety, fatigue, shortness of breath, constipation, loss of appetite, and difficulty sleeping.

Palliative care teams focus on what matters most to you in life. Palliative care teams help you clarify your goals, such as relief of pain or maintaining independence. They ensure that these values are communicated to your medical professionals so any treatments are in line with your goals.

Palliative care teams can help you make informed decisions. Treating serious illness often involves making difficult choices that affect your life and well-being in different ways. Palliative care physicians understand the risks and benefits of a treatment or exploring what would be most important toward the end of life.

Palliative care focuses on the whole person. Palliative care addresses a person’s physical needs and also places importance on the psychological, emotional, spiritual, cultural, and existential aspects of care.

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Palliative care providers can help patients at any age or stage of illness and provide multiple benefits.

- Management of physical or emotional symptoms that are affecting quality of life (e.g., pain, fatigue, depression, anxiety, shortness of breath, constipation, poor appetite)
- Clarification and communication of treatment goals with your health care team
- Assistance with making difficult decisions about medical care

FOR MORE INFORMATION
Center to Advance Palliative Care
https://www.capc.org/messaging-palliative-care/
Get Palliative Care Provider Directory
https://getpalliativecare.org/provider-directory/