



A guide to having the hospice conversation:

How to talk to your loved ones about hospice

Many patients or loved ones wish they had started the hospice conversation way sooner so that they could use the benefits of the hospice care team earlier.

According to KFF, 7 in 10 Americans at least know a little about hospice care, yet 69% of Americans generally avoid talking about death. Given that discrepancy, it's extremely important to know your loved one's wishes for end-of-life care, including how to have the hospice conversation if necessary. You can download and print this guide out to help navigate the conversation.

Please be advised, this document is simply a guide and not an official list of steps to follow. Each person's circumstance is different.

For more information, please visit ehab.com.

A patient is ready for the hospice conversation when:

- They have a terminal illness with a prognosis of six months or less
- **They begin exhibiting hospice indicators such as:**
 - Functional decline
 - Extreme weight loss
 - Multiple comorbidities and diseases
 - Increased infections
 - Increased hospitalizations
 - Dependence in most activities of daily living (ADL)

Start the conversation early.

- You don't have to wait until your loved one receives a diagnosis to begin talking about hospice.
- But if you do choose to wait until a diagnosis or prognosis, it's best to start the conversation as early as possible, even if it may be a hard subject to approach.
- The National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO) recommends introducing the topic in a broad sense. Start by getting to know your loved ones' personal concerns about their time left, what values they cherish the most and their overall view toward death.

Notes:

Make sure they understand what hospice care is.

- There are often a lot of misconceptions that surround hospice so it is important to explain what it is.
- Hospice is not a place, but rather a philosophy of care that focuses on providing compassionate care so people can live as fully and comfortably as possible in the last stages of their disease.
- It provides physical, psychological, spiritual and emotional support to the patient and their loved ones.

Notes:

Learn where your loved ones want to receive care.

- Explain that hospice can be started from wherever a patient calls home
- **What is your loved one's preferred environment?**

• Do they want to receive care at home?

• Whose home do they want to receive care at?

• Who do they expect to be in the home?

Notes:

Ask if your loved one wants heroic interventions at the end of life.

- **Are they comfortable with using treatments or devices to keep them alive?**

• Ventilators?

• Feeding tube?

• Dialysis?

- **Do they prefer some heroic interventions to others or are they comfortable with all of them?**

Notes:

Discuss advance directives and DNRs.

- **Do they know what advance directives are?**

- Advance directives are documents such as living wills, durable powers of attorney for health care and written medical orders that state what a patient would want if they cannot choose for themselves.

- **What are their preferences for resuscitation?**

- Do they have a Do-Not-Resuscitate order (DNR)?**

- A DNR helps outline your loved one's preference and will be posted in their room to prevent confusion and mistakes made along the care team. It tells physicians not to restore a patient's breathing or restart their heart in the event of cardiac arrest.

Learn who your loved one wants to be involved in their care.

- **Do they want extra support from the hospice care team:**

- Hospice aides?

- Bereavement specialists?

- Volunteers?

- Chaplains?

- **Do they want visitors at the end of life?**

Ask if there is anything else that really matters to them that they would like at the end of life.

For some hospice patients, what matters most is that they are kept comfortable. For others, it's that their kids are prepared to handle their death. Each person has individual wants and wishes as they begin hospice care.

- **What matters most to your loved one?**

Notes:



At Enhabit Home Health & Hospice, we care about learning what matters most to each patient and building care plans around that, regardless of what the patient's last wish may be.

If you or your loved one are ready to speak with hospice care professionals or have any questions about the process, scan here to contact us:

