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Serenity Point Hospice, LLC



Issue
Three

Insight Into All Things Hospice

Celebrating The **JOURNEY**

current topics >>>

The Journey

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Signs It Might Be Time For Hospice Care...

No one wants to think about losing a loved one. For the caregivers of terminally ill patients, however, it is not a matter of if but when. When curative treatment is no longer an option, it is time to start thinking about how to make your loved one as comfortable as possible for their remaining days. It is time to start thinking about hospice care. Every patient's journey is unique, but there are certain signs of end of life caregivers and family should look for to determine when to consider hospice. Hospice care is all about improving quality of life for both the patient and family, so make sure you give yourself and your loved one ample time to enjoy these benefits. Learn how to identify end of life signs so you and your loved one can make important decisions regarding hospice care.

Physical Signs of End of Life

When a terminally ill patient starts to decline in health and curative treatment is no longer an option, that is when to consider hospice. Because terminal diseases are so varied, it is best to consider common end of life signs as an indication that it is time to start hospice.

Here are some of the top physical signs of end of life:

- Frequent or recurring infections
- Rapid decline in health despite aggressive medical treatment
- Frequent hospitalizations or trips to the emergency room
- Uncontrolled pain, nausea, or vomiting
- Increase in the amount of time spent sleeping
- Loss of urinary or bowel control

- Chest congestion and/or rapid breathing
- Decrease in food and fluid intake
- Changes in body temperature (fever or feeling cool to the touch)
- Restlessness or repetitive motions
- Inability to perform daily tasks without assistance

Physical end of life signs are fairly straightforward and easy to identify, but they are not the only signs to consider. You should also look for changes in mental and emotional health.

Mental and Emotional End of Life Signs

Enduring a terminal illness takes its toll on the body, but the effects go much deeper than the physical level — they can also impact mental and emotional health. When your loved one starts to show certain end of life signs, it is time to consider hospice.

set the stage >>>

When Is It Time for Hospice?

A decision to enter hospice does not mean you are giving up. Hospice care is designed to help terminally ill patients live their remaining days to the fullest, increase quality of life and,



maximize the patient's expected lifespan. There is no set timeline for when to start hospice, but you should time it appropriately so your loved one can enjoy the benefits for as long as possible.



If you are wondering when to start hospice or how to obtain hospice care for yourself or a loved one, contact Serenity Point Hospice at any time by Calling.....

**309-435-7050.
On call 24/7**

Hospice is a fully covered Medicare benefit that any beneficiary is eligible to receive if a doctor determines life expectancy to be six months or less. The patient must forgo treatment for the terminal illness but may continue to receive treatment for other medical problems.

Hospice care is a holistic approach to treatment that focuses on the entire patient, not just the disease, and it

addresses the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs of the patient. The decision to enter hospice is a highly personal one, but it is not one that any patient needs to make alone. Caregivers and family should be involved in the decision to enter hospice and may continue to be involved in the patient's care through the end of life.



On-Call Service

*For after-hours needs, Serenity Point Hospice provides 24-hour telephone access to hospice clinicians who can answer questions, support caregivers over the phone or dispatch a team member to the bedside, if needed. **Ph 309-435-***

For more information go to www.serenitypointhospice.care



hospice advice >>> Eating Patterns

In the days and even weeks before death, the body slowly shuts down. During this time your loved one will gradually lose interest in food.

This is not starvation. Starvation happens when a healthy person does not get enough food and they experience intense hunger. When someone is dying, the body can no longer absorb or make use of food. Feelings of hunger and thirst go away. Your loved one will eat less, and may develop a preference for softer foods and liquids before the appetite disappears.

Dehydration may bring relief.

There is clear medical evidence that during the last phase of a terminal illness, dehydration can bring comfort. Vomiting may stop and pain from tumors may lessen. Coughing, congestion, and mucus in the lungs may also decrease.

Things you can do when appetite decreases:

- Allow your loved one to choose the foods that they find most appealing
- Do not force your loved one to eat or point out to them that they are eating less
- Make mealtime a quiet and pleasant time (candles, flowers and soft music)
- Make the most of breakfast—appetites tend to decrease over the day
- Offer favorite foods in small amounts or liquid nutritional supplements
- Have drinks available and consider softer foods, such as Jell-O, pudding, and ice cream
- Allow your loved one to rest after meals
- Practice good mouth care and offer ice chips and sips of water for dry mouth
- Prepare yourself emotionally for this natural transition

People who stop eating and drinking will eventually fall into a deep sleep and usually die in one to three weeks.

5 Activities to Do With a Terminally Ill Loved One

When someone you care about or love has been told they only have a few days, weeks or months to live, it can be difficult to deal with that reality. It's in our nature to always want to 'fix' things, so when we are unable to 'fix' the dying person, it's difficult. Because we may feel at a loss for what to say or do, it can lead to avoiding the terminally ill person or feeling like we can't do anything to improve the situation or make it better.



The person is still a person and alive—your friend, spouse, child, relative—the person he or she was before the terminal illness. They may not be able to do things they used to, but they are still the same person. The focus may shift to be more on you physically going to visit the person and spending time wherever he or she calls home, like a private residence or nursing home. When you are with the person, relax. It might be the last time you will be able to visit with your loved one, so enjoy and cherish every moment.

Below are some suggestions that may help you stay connected with your loved one who is dying:

1. If the person is able to converse with you, talk with them. Talk about the things you have always talked about together: family, community events, interests of the person, such as sports, crafts, new products, etc. Look through pictures he or she may have, or bring some of your photos to show them.
2. If the person is not able to converse but able to nod or shake his or her head, ask yes/no questions. Offer to read to your loved one. If the person likes a particular book or author, read that. Sometimes a long story may be too much for the person to follow or comprehend. If that is the case, read short stories that are one page or less. Many people like humor, try reading short humorous clips. The person may also appreciate Bible verses, devotions, poems or the newspaper being read aloud. Playing music and singing songs the individual enjoys is also a good option. Your voice doesn't have to be perfect, but it will be perfect to your loved one, and you will always have those fun memories. Just talking about the day, current events, your day, etc., may also be enjoyable to the person.
3. Talk about the things you did together. 'Remember when we ...' Laugh together about the memories you've shared. If you don't know the person's past very well, ask him or her to talk about what he or she did as a child, growing up, going to school, working, marriage and family, such as siblings, parents, grandparents, etc.
4. To most people, touch is very important. Ask if you may hold your loved one's hand, comb their hair or apply lotion to their hands, arms or feet. That may be painful or he/she simply may not want to be touched. Other things you can offer to do include applying moisturizer to his or her lips, making a favorite drink or food, or finding a cozy blanket or sweater to make your loved one comfortable.
5. Say goodbye. This may be difficult, but the dying person knows he or she is dying, and so do you. If the person is open to saying goodbye, say it. There may be tears and sadness, but that is OK. Say I love you and give hugs, if you are comfortable, and tell the person you are going to miss them.



Spiritual Distress..

Just as pain is at times a difficult experience to describe and quantify, it is no less so with spiritual pain or distress. It is not uncommon to find that those who are experiencing life threatening illness may also experience spiritual distress. As defined by the Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association, "spiritual distress refers to a disruption in one's beliefs of value system, a shaking of one's basic beliefs". Anandarajah and Hight note that "spiritual distress and spiritual crisis" occur when a person is "unable to find sources of meaning, hope, love, peace, comfort, strength, and connection in life or when conflict occurs between their beliefs and

Recognizing Distress

It is important to recognize issues, symptoms or attitudes expressed by a patient that may point to spiritual distress. Those who question the meaning of life, question where God is during their suffering, see their illness as retribution for a life of poor choices, express anger at God or a higher power may be experiencing spiritual distress. Other symptoms include feeling as if their sense of direction and purpose has been lost, questioning their belief systems or directly seeking spiritual help.

Listening & Engaging

For many patients who identify spirituality and religiosity as important to their experience and response to illness, they wish for the opportunity to discuss their spiritual challenges with their health care team. Some patients may even see their providers as tools used by God to treat suffering or offer healing. But the ultimate decision on the outcome of an illness is viewed to lie only with God, so if medicine fails, miracles are still possible. Having a clinician who is open to faith and to engaging in spiritual discussions can often serve to put patients at ease, allowing them to explore the challenges they face as they consider their



final thoughts....

Don't Wait – Hospice Provides Months of Care and Support

We hear it far too often: **"I wish we had called hospice sooner."** Once people have experienced the level of care their loved one gets, as well as the education and support provided to family members, they understand how much having a hospice care team improves the whole family's quality of life. With help with patient hygiene needs; assistance from volunteers to provide companionship, respite, and help with other tasks; education on disease progression; and clinical support you can call anytime of the day or night; families can concentrate on what's most important to them and their loved one. So why wait?

You don't have to wait, you can refer yourself, a family member, neighbor or a friend.

Because families are often waiting for someone to tell them "it's time," they miss out on months of care and improved quality of life. The Medicare Hospice Benefit provides for several months of care and covers all care, medications, supplies and medical care related to the patient's disease. It is available once the patient's doctor determines that given the current rate of decline the patient has a life expectancy that is no longer curable.

Other benefits families experience include emotional and spiritual care; help in connecting with needed resources; education on the patient's disease, how it progresses, and what they can do to make them comfortable; assistance from volunteers in planning a special celebration, fulfilling a bucket list wish, or just being a companion that takes time to talk or read them a book; and grief support before and after death.

Time after time, we've seen patients and their families wait to sign on to hospice until their very last days. Why? Sometimes it's because they don't know about hospice; yet, more often it's because they fear the "H" word and all that it signifies. Death is just not a place people want to go — be they providers or patients.

Death can be beautiful and peaceful at Serenity Point Hospice we strive to provide excellent care for individuals of all ages. Our goal is to show you the beautiful side of hospice. It is to help you maintain the highest quality of life in the comfort of your own home. Our team works together to help patients and their families cope with all the physical, spiritual and emotional aspects of dying. We understand the importance of family and we do our best to treat your family like our own. We are here to support, listen, and respond to your care with compassion and understanding.




coming soon >>>

In The Next Issue

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- *Caregiver Wellness*
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When Every Moment Matters



When life feels out of control and your heart is aching, "Finding Serenity Grief Support Group" helps you find spiritual peace, strength, and encouragement while celebrating life's journey.

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Evangelical Free Church
1300 E Chestnut St Canton IL 61520
for more information
Call 309-435-7050**

**It is a FREE service provided by
Serenity Point Hospice
and is open to the public.**



Contact us at **309-453-7050** / www.serenitypointhospice care