



## Hospice Care for Neurological Diseases



Modern technology and medicine have allowed for vast improvements in patient care and quality of life. However, neurological conditions and diseases are some of the most devastating for patients and their families to deal with. As neurological diseases progress, families are left to face decisions about what medical support to give.

Even when family members have an advanced directive to follow, there are still many overwhelming choices to be made as quality of life begins to decrease: should there be a feeding tube? What about a ventilator? When patients must face whether the time has come for discontinuing

medical support, the effect is felt by the entire family. Hummingbird Hospice is here to help.

### **Is it the Right Time to Ask about Hospice?**

Whether a loved one faces sudden, unexpected loss of quality of life with a stroke or a coma or they are struggling with a condition such as MS where quality of life has declined over months or years, it can be difficult to know when is the right time to ask for hospice care.

Usually, hospice is offered to patients and their family when the patient is thought to have six months or less to live. Hospice can be contacted when patients face a condition which is unlikely to improve with time and treatment. When families struggle to decide about discontinuing medical supports which have been made available to their loved one, hospice can help. While only a physician can give a clinical determination of life expectancy, there are some common signs indicating everyone involved may benefit from seeking hospice care.

### **Patients Affected by Stroke**

Patients who have suffered a stroke may have gone into a comatose or persistent vegetative state. Patients may be conscious but struggling with a continuous decline in their ability to function. These types of patients can benefit from hospice care.

### **Patients in a Coma**

If patients or their families wish to avoid the introduction or discontinue the use of feeding tubes, medical hydration, or breathing machines, hospice can help with support during this difficult time.

### **Patients with Parkinson's Disease or Multiple Sclerosis**

Patients who are showing difficulty breathing on their own or are having trouble swallowing may benefit greatly from hospice care.

## Patients Suffering any Neurological Disease

When patients have general declining quality of life indicators, such as rapidly becoming bed bound, struggling to communicate intelligibly, requiring pureed food, or needing major assistance or having total dependence on others for daily personal care, hospice can offer palliative care.

While a neurologist or personal doctor might recommend when they believe the time is right for calling in hospice care, often patients or their family members must be their own advocate. You, your loved one, or a physician may contact our office to find out if hospice care is appropriate.

## What Services Can Hospice Offer My Loved One?

The hospice team will first evaluate the patient's status and gather information about patient and family needs. After this, we can update patient care and support as conditions change: even on a day-to-day basis if needed. Our goal for you and your loved one is to offer support and help relieve physical and emotional distress as much as possible so patients can retain dignity and be as comfortable as possible at the end of life.



## Communicating Wishes

Once your family and friends know about your desire to have hospice care, it's importance to discuss your goals for the future. It's also important to find out what your loved ones are concerned about when making your hospice plan. Make sure your loved ones understand that choosing hospice is not giving up, but, rather, involving hospice is an active choice to make sure everyone's needs are met.

Often, loved ones may be thinking about hospice but do not want to raise the issue out of regard for your feelings; therefore, is important to take initiative and express your wishes.

It is also vital to be a good listener. It is normal to encounter resistance or indecision during a discussion about hospice care. However, if you listen and do your best to understand your loved one's reasoning on any decision, you can be better prepared to ease any worries during the next hospice discussion.

## Contact Hummingbird Hospice for Support

Hummingbird Hospice can significantly improve the overall quality of life for patients struggling with neurological disease and their families. To learn more about our services, call one of our compassionate care coordinators at 210-908-9774 visit us online at [www.hbhsatx.com](http://www.hbhsatx.com).

*Choosing hospice care doesn't mean that you've given up hope. Instead, hospice care means you're changing what you hope for.*

