

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **WHAT IS HOSPICE?**

Hospice provides comfort and support to patients and families facing a life-limiting illness. The goal of hospice care is quality of life and meeting the physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual needs of patients. The focus is on comfort care rather than on a cure.

### **IS HOSPICE ONLY FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE DYING?**

Hospice care is provided to anyone who has a medical condition with a prognosis of six months or less if the disease or condition runs its normal course. Hospice is for patients who are no longer pursuing aggressive treatment or curative care.

### **WHO IS BEST SUITED FOR HOSPICE CARE?**

Seriously ill patients who have decided that their priority is to have the best quality of life possible are the people who are best suited for hospice.

### **WHERE DOES HOSPICE CARE TAKE PLACE?**

Hospice care usually takes place in the comfort of your home but can be provided in any setting including skilled nursing homes, residential care facilities and the hospital.

### **ISN'T USING HOSPICE THE SAME AS "GIVING UP"?**

Not at all! Although it may be that your loved one's condition has reached a point that a cure is not likely--or not likely enough to be worth the side effects of treatment--that does not mean there is nothing left to do. In fact, an emphasis on quality of life and easing pain and distress often allows the patient to spend his or her last months focusing on the things that are ultimately the most important and meaningful. Far from giving up, hospice helps families truly live well and support each other during a stressful, but in the end very natural, family life passage.

### **WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO START HOSPICE CARE?**

At any time during a life-threatening illness, when a cure is no longer possible or the patient makes a decision to discontinue curative care. The decision to enter hospice care is made with the patient, family and their physician preferably as soon as it is clear that the focus is no longer on curing the illness. This allows for sufficient time for the hospice team to establish a relationship and manage patient symptoms. Most patients and families who receive hospice care say they wish they had known about it earlier, that they needed the help much sooner than they received it.

### **SHOULD WE WAIT FOR THE DOCTOR TO SUGGEST HOSPICE?**

You can, but oddly enough, doctors often wait for families to bring it up. This is part of the reason that people often receive hospice care so late in the process. If you think your loved one and family might benefit from the support of weekly home visits from staff who specialize in pain control and the easing of distress, ask your

doctor if hospice might be something to consider now, or in the near future. If, when you are truly honest with yourself, you realize that you would not be surprised if your loved one were to die in the next six to twelve months, ask the doctor if he or she would be surprised. If the answer is anything close to "No, I would not be surprised," then maybe it's a good time to begin a discussion about hospice. If you would like more information, please feel free to call us at 707-778-6242. We would be happy to talk with you or to do an informational home visit—no obligation or strings attached.

### **WHO PAYS FOR HOSPICE?**

If the person you care for has Medicare and meets hospice eligibility requirements, then the government will pay as much as 100% of the cost. In such a case, there is no deductible and no copayment. Not only are the services of the hospice staff entirely covered, but medical supplies and prescriptions relating to pain and comfort management are also covered. Individuals who do not have Medicare coverage but have coverage from private insurance should talk with their insurance company to find out whether there are eligible and how much is required in terms of a deductible and copayments.

### **IS HOSPICE SERVICES OF ST. JOSEPH HEALTH A CATHOLIC HOSPICE?**

Hospice Services of St. Joseph Health serves all religions and denominational preferences. Our chaplains are educated in all faiths and religious practices.

### **HOW DOES A PERSON GET ADMITTED TO HOSPICE?**

Call any of our three hospice locations listed below and our Admissions Team will be able to arrange for a physician order. Our staff will make an appointment to visit the patient, complete and assessment, sign consents and develop a plan of care.

**Memorial Hospice (Santa Rosa) | 707-568-1094**

**Hospice of Petaluma (Petaluma) | 707-778-6242**

**North County Hospice (Healdsburg) | 707-431-1135**

### **IF I HAVE QUESTIONS WHO DO I CALL?**

Hospice Services of St. Joseph Health staff is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.