

Understanding Hospice

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The nation recently honored the life of former President Jimmy Carter. In February 2023, his choice to begin hospice care spotlighted this model of compassionate, high-quality support. He continued to receive this care for nearly two years.

Hospice focuses on comfort, not curing. It is a customized model of care that helps people with life limiting illnesses live with dignity. Hospice focuses on maintaining quality of life for the person, rather than aggressively treating the disease or illness.



Common myths of hospice care include the following:

MYTH: Hospice is only for the last weeks or days of one's life.

Hospice can begin when a physician determines a person has approximately six months or less to live if the disease were to run its normal course. Pain management and comfort care give a person an improved quality of life and more comfortable days.

MYTH: Hospice means you have given up.

Receiving hospice care does not mean that you have given up hope. The focus of care is to provide a person with a better quality of life, be more comfortable, and feel more like themselves. Sometimes, people will go on and off hospice if their health improves, if they no longer qualify for services, or if they choose to pursue treatments.

MYTH: Hospice care hastens death.

People sometimes associate medication used for pain control, such as morphine, with a person's death. Remember, the person on hospice is already entering the last stages of their life. In many instances, controlling pain and discomfort allows the person to live longer.

MYTH: Hospice care is just for the dying patient.

Hospice also provides caregiving assistance and grief counseling for family members and caregivers. Most providers offer these bereavement services up to 13 months after the patient's death.

Hospice provides individuals the freedom to choose how they want to spend their remaining days. Engaging in family conversations about end-of-life decisions helps us recognize the value of hospice care, reflect on our own wishes, and communicate what matters most to us.

Information for today's article came from K-State Research and Extension's Fact Sheet: [Understanding Hospice](#). For more information contact Tara Solomon-Smith, tsolomon@ksu.edu, or call 620-244-3826.