

How to Know When It's Time to Call Hospice

A Simple Family Checklist

Hospice is not about "giving up."

It is about shifting from cure to comfort.

Use this checklist if you are unsure whether it is time to make the call.

Physical Decline

- Sleeping most of the day
- Eating significantly less
- Noticeable weight loss
- Increased weakness or frequent falls
- Needing help with most daily activities
- More time in bed or chair
- Shortness of breath with minimal activity
- Recurrent infections or hospitalizations

If several are present, decline may be accelerating.

Emotional and Caregiver Signs

- You feel constantly overwhelmed
- You are afraid to leave them alone
- You are exhausted or not sleeping
- You feel unsure what is normal anymore
- You wish someone would just explain what's happening

Hospice supports families as much as patients.

Functional Changes

- Difficulty swallowing
- Confusion increasing
- Needing assistance with bathing, dressing, toileting
- Incontinence developing or worsening
- Unable to safely live alone

Loss of independence is often a key sign.

Medical Pattern

- Doctor has said, "There's nothing more we can do."
- Condition continues to worsen despite treatment
- Multiple ER visits in the last 6 months
- Medications are being added but improvement is limited
- You feel like you're managing crises instead of stability

Hospice is appropriate when focus shifts from fixing to supporting.

Important to Know

You do not have to wait until the final days.

Hospice is available when:

- A physician believes life expectancy may be 6 months or less if the illness follows its natural course.
- The goal shifts to comfort and quality of life

Earlier hospice often means:

- Better symptom control
- Fewer hospitalizations
- More support at home
- Less crisis decision-making

If You're Unsure

Call anyway.

A hospice evaluation is free.

You are not committing by asking questions.

Sometimes the call brings clarity even if you are not ready to enroll.

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