

Who Qualifies for Hospice?

To qualify for hospice care, a doctor must certify that a patient has a terminal illness and has a prognosis of six months or less.

In reality, of course, it is often difficult for doctors to put this type of a timeline on a patient's life. However, most insurers and all Medicare administrators require this diagnosis before they will cover the cost of hospice care. Please note, however, that **Providence Hospice does not turn anyone away based on their ability to pay.**

The need for hospice care is not always obvious, but there are some signs that may indicate a time for a hospice assessment.

Has the patient:

- Been hospitalized or taken to the emergency room several times during the past 6 months?
- Been making increasingly frequent calls to your office?
- Been increasing medication to lessen physical pain?
- Experienced noticeable weight loss?
- Been consistently weaker or more tired?
- Noticed they have consistent shortness of breath?

Again, it can be challenging knowing when to refer a patient to hospice. A good question to consider is "would I be surprised if this patient died within the next year?" If you answer "yes" to this question, it is time to consider a hospice referral. Early referral allows patients and patient families to receive the full benefit of what hospice has to offer.

Please review the article on "Starting the Conversation About End-of-Life Care." (can this be a link back to that one?)