



# Palliative Care Explained

Hospice palliative care takes as its starting point the belief that life is meant to be lived with dignity and comfort, until its end.

Hospice palliative care is a special kind of health care for individuals and families who are living with or dying from advanced illness or who are bereaved. It provides physical, emotional, social and spiritual care and support for individuals and their loved ones. Emphasizing the dignity of the person, it aims to relieve suffering and improve the quality of life

Unfortunately, many patients and families are unaware of the ways in which hospice palliative care can enhance quality of life. It should be introduced early in the course of illness, in conjunction with all other services being offered to the patient and family in order that it not be feared. Hospice palliative care can span a period of days, weeks, months or even years. It is appropriate for patients of all ages who are dealing with a life-threatening illness – from a child with cancer to a senior nearing the end of his/her life. The importance of taking compassionate care of those, young or old, who need and deserve comfort and support is assumed in all of the work done by hospice palliative care.

Through a caregiving team of family, friends, healthcare professionals and volunteers, needs and choices are sensitively met. It can be provided in any setting - at home, in hospitals, in nursing homes or in special hospice facilities.

Palliative care, most of all, is individualized care that stresses living fully to the very end with dignity and comfort, surrounded by a circle of support.

## **What Services does Hospice Palliative Care Provide?**

Choice of care is at the heart of hospice palliative care. Services are tailored to each person's special situation. While not every program offers every service, here are some examples of the services that may be provided in Nova Scotia:

- Public and professional education
- Expert medical care to help with pain and other symptoms
- Planning with loved ones for a team approach to care
- Emotional support for all loved ones
- Spiritual support for people of all faiths and beliefs
- Arranging for home care services

- Arranging for respite care, to give at-home caregivers a break
- Trained volunteers to visit with patients and give emotional support
- Telephone counselling in crisis situations
- Information about financial, legal and other services
- Sensitivity to personal, cultural and religious values and beliefs and practices
- Counselling to help to adjust to change and loss
- Sympathetic listeners who can talk about and hear about dying
- Ongoing bereavement support after the death of a loved one

Palliative care programs are located in many communities throughout Nova Scotia. To find out how a hospice palliative care program can help you – or about the hospice palliative care services in your community contact the Nova Scotia Hospice Palliative Care Association at (902) 893-5554 Ext. 2308.