

# *Hospice Levels of Care*

## *Level 1: Routine Home Care*

Routine Home Care is the primary level of care under the hospice benefit. If a patient resides in a nursing home, it can also be called routine nursing home care and includes:

- Skilled nursing services
- Physician oversight
- Social services
- Certified nurse aide services
- Counseling services, including pastoral, spiritual, bereavement, dietary, and others
- Medications
- Medical equipment
- Medical supplies
- Personal care supplies
- Lab and diagnostic studies related to terminal diagnosis
- Therapy services when deemed palliative and medically necessary

## *Level 2: Continuous Home Care*

If you have Continuous Home Care, a nurse and/or a home health aide will remain in the patient's home environment for eight to 24 hours per day. Continuous care is a short-term level of care, and must be reevaluated every 24 hours by a registered nurse.

### *Qualifying Symptoms for Continuous Home Care*

- Unrelieved pain
- Intractable, severe nausea and vomiting
- Severe shortness of breath
- A temporary breakdown in the primary caregiver support system

## *Level 3: General Inpatient Care*

Some patients have short-term symptoms so severe they cannot get adequate treatment at home, and require treatment at an inpatient facility.

Symptoms requiring inpatient care are the same as those requiring continuous care, only the setting of care may be different. With inpatient care, nurses are available around the clock to administer medications, treatments, and emotional support to help make the patient more comfortable.

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## *Inpatient Facilities*

There are several types of facilities that offer inpatient hospice services:

- A free-standing facility owned and operated by a hospice company
- An inpatient hospice unit within a hospital
- A hospice unit in a skilled nursing facility, such as a nursing home

## *Level 4: Respite Care*

Respite care services are more for the family than for the patient.

If a patient's family is the primary source of care and cannot meet their loved one's needs due to caregiver stress or other extenuating circumstances, a patient may temporarily be admitted to an inpatient environment to give the family a needed break or respite.

Most insurance covers five days in respite care. Once that period expires, the patient is discharged and returns home.

## *Eligibility and Determining Level of Care*

In order to qualify for hospice care, the patient's doctor, and often a hospice doctor as well, must determine that the patient is terminally ill, with a life expectancy of six months or less; the decision to treat someone at a higher level of care falls to the hospice physician.

## *Additional Services*

Our hospice aides provide bathing, and personal care on an intermittent basis. Their visit frequency is determined by the Registered Nurse in accordance with patient need and medicare guidelines. Hospice aide visits generally last 45 minutes to an hour, with a care plan developed by the Registered Nurse.

Often, a patient's needs exceed the family's ability to manage and fall beyond the scope of hospice services. In these instances, a family may decide to seek additional care in the form of Personal Assistance Services. While Pathway Hospice also maintains a license to provide PAS in the State of Texas, we think it is important to focus on what we do best. To better serve our patients and families, we partner with several excellent PAS agencies and can provide information upon request.