What to Expect When Your Physician Suggests Hospice Care
You have been given this booklet because your doctor feels that you or someone you love is in need of a special kind of care called “hospice.”

The purpose of this booklet is to explain in detail:

1. What qualifies a person for hospice care?
2. What can be expected when Celtic Hospice & Palliative Care Services is referred?
3. What a typical week is like with our hospice?
4. How is hospice care paid for?
5. How does hospice affect the doctor/patient relationship?
6. How soon can hospice care begin?
7. Does hospice mean that you can never return to the hospital?
8. What happens if you change your mind?

Please remember that help is as close as your telephone.
Celtic Hospice & Palliative Care Services 800-355-8894

1. **What qualifies a person for hospice care?**
   Any person with a life threatening illness, which measures life in months rather than years, qualifies for hospice care. Because hospice is a concept which promotes comfort and support (physical, emotional, and spiritual), it’s important to understand that when a person elects hospice care, he has come to the decision to change the focus from cure to comfort. For example, a person with cancer who elects hospice care has come to the decision, along with his/her doctor, that further chemotherapy or radiation therapy are not adding to the quality of life. This person has decided not to undergo diagnostic tests (CT scans, etc.), but to focus instead on comfort at home.

   The key is to talk about this with your doctor and your family, always remembering that you have the final say in deciding whether or not to choose hospice care.

2. **What can be expected when Celtic Hospice & Palliative Care Services is referred?**
   When you have decided that you would like to take advantage of hospice services, a referral is made by your doctor, the hospital social worker, or other health care advocate. A representative from our hospice will contact you on the same day and make an appointment to come to your home at your earliest convenience. This is usually the nurse who will be part of your care from the first visit forward. It’s always a good idea to invite family members who will be part of your support to that first meeting. The nurse will ask about your medical history and will assess how you and your family are managing. Together, you will review medications and decide the amount and frequency of services you need. The nurse will also explain the forms requiring your signature and answer any questions you and your family might have.

3. **What is a typical week like with our hospice?**
   Hospice services are individually tailored to each person and his/her family. In a typical week, you can expect a visit from your primary nurse one to three times, and additionally as needed. Your nurse will always let you know the approximate time of each visit. If you are in need of assistance with a bath, shampoo, linen change, etc., that assistance will be provided two or more times per week. Our staff also includes counselors. The social worker will contact you to schedule a visit to gather information with the purpose of coordinating community resource support, as well as to provide emotional support and counseling to you and your family. You can also expect a call from our chaplain who is available to you and your family in different ways, such as a listener, advisor, and a friend. The chaplain’s visits are also determined by your desire for this kind of support.

   Another part of hospice services that you may want to utilize is the volunteer program. The volunteer coordinator is interested in making sure that you are safe if your caregiver needs to run
errands, attend a doctor’s appointment, or just take a few hours off. A volunteer is available two to three hours once or twice a week. It’s always a good idea to plan ahead when thinking about a volunteer so that arrangements can be made and your request honored.

In a typical week with our hospice program, you may need to use the on-call number: 800-355-8894. This number connects you with our hospice 24 hours a day, seven days a week. After hours, the nurse on call will return your call as soon as possible. Please feel free to call with any questions or concerns.

4. **How is hospice care paid for?**
Hospice care is covered under Medicare Part A, many private insurance plans, and Medical Assistance.

Under the Medicare Hospice Benefit, all comfort medications related to the illness, as well as medical equipment (such as oxygen) are covered. Supplies such as disposable bed pads are also covered. And, of course, all services (nursing home health aides, etc.) are covered.

It’s important to know that your regular insurance and co-insurance are not affected in any way by hospice care.

5. **How does this affect the doctor/patient relationship?**
Your primary nurse communicates with your doctor to ask advice and to relay changes in your condition. You are encouraged to keep appointments with your doctor as long as it is feasible. Even when you no longer choose to keep office visits, your primary nurse continues to stay in touch with your doctor, always focusing on your comfort.
Although the hospice team’s medical director is a valuable resource, providing advice on matters of symptom management and comfort, your care is always directed by your own doctor.

6. **How soon can hospice care begin?**
Hospice care can begin as soon as we are notified that you are interested in this kind of care. You will receive a call from Celtic Hospice & Palliative Care Services to schedule a visit. In most cases, the first visit takes place within 24 hours.

7. **Does hospice mean that I can never return to the hospital?**
Hospice care is designed to help you stay in the comfort of your home by bringing the care to you rather than you feeling the necessity of going to the hospital in the event of an emergency. There are rare times, however, when your comfort may require hospitalization. In this case, with your permission, your doctor and our hospice team will make arrangements for your transfer to the hospital. The important thing to remember is to call the hospice number in all cases rather than calling 911.

8. **What happens if you change your mind?**
It’s important for you to know that if you decide at some point to pursue aggressive treatment for your illness, or if you decide that hospice care is not something you would like to pursue, you may elect to come off our hospice program at any time. This process is called revocation. You may elect to resume hospice care at a later date if you desire.

We sincerely hope this booklet has been helpful to you and your family.

Thank you for allowing our hospice the opportunity to share this important information with you.
“God of hope,
You never stop believing in us.
You are always with us.
Assuring that You will care for us.
Encouraging us not to lose hope.

Help me to find little glimmers of hope.
In even the worst days.”

Joyce Rupp