

# Palliative Care

Palliative care is a healthcare specialty that is focused on improving quality of life for anyone with a chronic illness. It is not just for the end of a person's life.

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Palliative care can be used alongside curative treatments. It is appropriate for people of all ages and at any stage of illness, from the time of diagnosis until the end of the person's life. It is provided by an integrated team of healthcare professionals which may include doctors, nurses, pharmacists, social workers, chaplains, and other specialists. This team works with the VHL specialists that patients normally see to provide the patient and loved ones with an extra layer of support.

The palliative care team will meet with a patient to determine his / her values and priorities so together the Goals of Care can be established. They will help patients address the many forms of pain or distress that may accompany a serious illness whether that be physical, emotional, spiritual, or social. The palliative care team specializes in symptom management which may include pain, anxiety, depression, nausea, constipation, dizziness, fatigue, and difficulty sleeping. The focus is on the patient as a *whole person*. They want to help support patients and improve their quality of life.

The palliative care team will help patients explore and understand all treatment options available so each patient can make an informed decision which fits their Goals of Care. The palliative care team will help communicate the Goals of Care to the VHL specialists so everyone on the care team understands what is important to the patient. Patients and caregivers should talk to their doctors about receiving a referral for this extra layer of support.