

What is Hospice?

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What comes to mind when someone says the word hospice? The final hours of a loved-one's life? Chopin's "Funeral March"? There are so many misconceptions surrounding hospice care that it's easy to forget what the term "hospice" actually means. Hospice is a word used to define end-of-life care for a patient whose illness is no longer responding to aggressive curative treatment. While the term has origins dating back to medieval times—where it was used to describe a place of shelter and rest for weary or sick travelers on long journeys—the definition has changed to encompass so much more than just a place of rest. Hospice care provides a myriad of services and resources all of which are available to those in Boyle, Lincoln, Garrard, and Mercer county thanks to Heritage Hospice, Inc.

Located in Danville, Heritage Hospice, Inc. aspires to provide compassionate care for patients and families during the journey through life-limiting illness. For a patient to be eligible for hospice care the patient must have been diagnosed with a life-limiting illness with a prognosis of six months or less to live assuming the disease follows its normal course and the patient is no longer seeking aggressive treatment. Hospice care is a Medicare Part A benefit and many other commercial insurances and Medicaid also offer a hospice care benefit. With hospice care, a number of services are provided including: helping the patient manage pain and symptoms; offering emotional and psychosocial/spiritual support; providing drugs, medical supplies, and equipment; coaching family on how to care for patient; delivering special services as needed (i.e. speech language therapy, physical therapy, etc.); and providing bereavement care and counseling to surviving family and friends.

In addition to all of these services, hospice care also provides access to a team of professionals who are there to help meet the needs of the patient. This team typically consists of the patient's personal physician, the hospice medical director, nurses, a social worker, a chaplain, hospice aides, a trained volunteer, bereavement counselors, and other specialists as needed. Hospice staff is also on-call 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

So, when is a good time to access the various resources and services hospice provides? Anytime. Knowing about the types of services available is an important step to receiving the care you or a loved one may need, exactly when needed most. Families often comment, "I wish we had known about you earlier. What a difference you have made in our lives!" Hospice care is only one phone call away.

As easy as it is to succumb to misconceptions and begin humming along to "Funeral March" when someone mentions the word hospice, remember hospice encompasses so much more. Instead, think of the special kind of caring and support an agency full of people will provide to your or your loved one. Hospice extends far beyond just medical care. Hospice also addresses the emotional, social, and spiritual needs of the entire family. Heritage Hospice, Inc. assists family members and caregivers during the illness and offer bereavement support during the 13 months following death. Hospice is undoubtedly the best option in the last months of life as it offers many benefits, not only for the individual who is dying, but also for loved ones who will be left behind. For more information, call Heritage Hospice, Inc. at 859-236-2425.