

Referral to Community Palliative Care in Canterbury

Information for patients, families and whānau

What is palliative care?

Palliative care is an approach to care for any person who has a life limiting illness that is not able to be cured. Palliative care involves caring for the whole person; looking after their physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual, social, and cultural needs. It also involves supporting family, whānau and carers.

The role of palliative care is to help people to live as well as possible, despite the challenges that may result from having an advanced illness or condition. Palliative care is not only for people with cancer, and it does not necessarily mean someone is going to die soon. Often people receive palliative care support while still under the care of other specialist services and while receiving treatments aimed at prolonging their lives.

What can palliative care help with?

Palliative care focuses on assisting people with any issues or concerns they might have as a result of their illness and as they approach the end of their life. Examples of these include:

- Treatment of physical symptoms such as pain, nausea, and fatigue
- Medication monitoring, including side effects of medication
- Helping people to talk about whatever is important to them and to their whānau, for example, concerns, hopes and priorities.
- Nursing procedures such as wound dressings, tubes, and injections
- Practicalities including help in the home and help with personal care and activities
- Supporting family, whānau and carers
- Providing care, support and guidance at the time of death, and afterwards

Who provides palliative care in the Canterbury region?

Most palliative care is provided by General Practice teams and district nurses. This is called *primary palliative care*. Primary palliative care can also be provided by other services you are involved with, for example the health professionals you see in hospital.

All people referred for palliative care are allocated to a *district nursing service* for primary palliative care alongside your GP. There are three district nursing services in Christchurch;

- Healthcare New Zealand
- Access Home Health
- Nurse Maude

Your referral will be randomly allocated to one of these providers. If you live in a rural area, your referral will be sent to the local community nursing service. Please let your referrer know if you have a preference to be cared for by a specific district nursing service.

You should be contacted by your allocated district nursing service within a few days of a referral being sent. How quickly you are contacted will depend on the information provided on the referral, with more urgent referrals being contacted more quickly. If you have not heard from a district nurse within three days of a referral being sent, please contact the Adult Community Referral Centre on (03) 3377765 to ensure your

referral has been received and a service allocated. See below for **district nursing contact numbers**.

General practitioners (GPs) are an *essential* part of primary palliative care. If you have been referred to palliative care on discharge from hospital or from the hospital outpatient clinic, it is recommended that you arrange to see your GP as soon as possible to ensure all arrangements are in place and that everyone is on the same page. Consider taking a support person along with you.

What is SPECIALIST palliative care?

Sometimes GPs, district nurses or other health providers request additional advice or support from *Specialist Palliative Care*. Specialist palliative care teams have staff with additional training and expertise. In the Canterbury region community specialist palliative care is provided by the **Nurse Maude Hospice Palliative Care Service**. They also provide inpatient hospice services at Nurse Maude Hospice in Merivale.

Many people do not ever need support from specialist palliative care as their needs can be met by their General Practice team and district nurses. If extra support is requested, this might occur at the same time as the initial referral to primary palliative care, or at any point in the future. Specialist palliative care services work closely with general practice teams and district nurses who will continue to provide the majority of palliative care to patients, even if they have been referred to specialist services.

If you are not receiving input from specialist palliative care and you feel that extra support would be helpful, please talk to your GP or district nurse.

Collection of health information

Sometimes it will be necessary for you to repeat information about your health when new services become involved in your care. It is important that each health professional fully understands your situation to be able to provide the best possible care. We acknowledge that repeating information can be distressing and appreciate your understanding and patience regarding this.

If you have any further questions, or aspects of care that you need to discuss, do not hesitate to ask any member of your health care team.

Making urgent contact with palliative care

If your symptoms get worse between GP appointments or nurse visits, or if you feel things are not going as expected, ring your GP practice or your district nurse and request an earlier review. District nurses are available 24/7 for urgent situations - see below for the telephone number of your district nursing team.

If you have had contact with palliative care at the Hospice you can ring that number for advice and support. In emergency situations, St John Ambulance is always available - ring 111 and request an ambulance.

Primary palliative care - district nursing contact information

Access Community Health: Phone 0800 284 663 www.access.org.nz

Healthcare New Zealand: Phone (03) 377 7527 www.healthcarenz.co.nz

Nurse Maude: Phone (03) 375 4200 www.nursemaude.org.nz

Further information

HealthInfo Canterbury: www.healthinfo.org.nz Use the search word "palliative care"

Health Navigator NZ: www.healthnavigator.org.nz

Hospice New Zealand: www.hospice.org.nz

Cancer Society: Phone 0800 226 237 Christchurch office (03) 379 5835 www.cancer.org.nz