

# Correcting Hospice Myths and Misconceptions

The word “hospice” often raises the mistaken shadow of myths and misconceptions. The following list should increase your understanding of the concept and reality of hospice.

**Myth: People don’t really want to be in hospice care.**

**Truth:** A Gallup Poll reveals that 9 out of 10 adults would prefer to die in their homes, free of pain, surrounded by family and loved ones. Hospice works to make this happen.

**Myth: Hospice is a place.**

**Truth:** Hospice is a concept and philosophy of care. Most patients are cared for in the comfort and safety of their own home with family and friends nearby. Some organizations do have a facility, such as McLeod Hospice House, where patients can stay if they meet inpatient criteria, need respite care or seek residential care.

**Myth: Hospice care is limited to 6 months.**

**Truth:** One criteria for hospice eligibility involves your doctor’s determination that you have a life expectancy of 6 months or less, if your illness runs its normal course. Yet, it can be difficult for doctors to know how long someone will live. Once a person qualifies for hospice, they can continue on hospice and their doctor will determine continued eligibility. If the patient’s health improves, they can stop receiving hospice care. If their health fails, they can again enter hospice care.

Under Medicare, once certified by their doctor and a hospice medical director, a patient qualifies for two 90-day periods, then an unlimited number of 60-day periods. After the first 180 day-period, the patient must be re-certified by the hospice physician; then, again every 60-days.

**Myth: To be on Hospice, I need to leave my doctor and use the hospice doctor.**

**Truth:** Patients are encouraged to keep their own doctor. The Hospice team will work with your personal physician to develop the care plan and deliver the care. You can continue to go to your physician’s office.

**Myth: Hospice is only for the patient.**

**Truth:** Clearly, hospice care primarily focuses on the patient. But the Hospice team also seeks to provide emotional support and quality of life for the family members and caregivers.

**Myth: Hospice is only for cancer patients.**

**Truth:** Only about half the patients in hospice care suffer from cancer. All other non-cancer diseases – such as liver, lung (COPD), heart disease, Alzheimer’s, dementia and more – benefit from the hospice teams ability to treat pain and other symptoms.