

Palliative Care Frequently Asked Questions

Who can receive palliative care & when is it useful?

Some people wonder if palliative care is only for people with cancer, or for a very short time at the end of life. In fact, palliative care is available for anyone with difficulties related to a life-limiting illness and can be helpful from early on for many patients and families, right through to the final days of life. Involving palliative care does not stop you from having other medical treatments that are helpful for your health and wellbeing – we work together with your other care providers.

What facilities are provided at the Palliative Care Unit?

The Palliative Care Unit has a mix of shared and single rooms, and access to a common lounge area, kitchenette and courtyard. Meals and snacks are provided for patients. You may wish to bring personal items that will help you feel more at home in your room, although you are advised not to bring valuable items as we are unable to offer secure storage. Information about parking and other amenities available within the hospital is available [here](#).

What are the visiting hours at the Palliative Care Unit?

Visitor restrictions are in place in accordance with requirements – see information available [here](#). We are doing our best to accommodate the needs of our patients and families.

How long will I stay in the Palliative Care Unit?

Like any hospital stay, this varies from person to person, depending on your health condition, symptoms, and care needs. Some patients stay for a short length of time, others for up to a week or two. A number of patients are able to be discharged from the unit, and may or may not require another admission in the future. Some people can return to their usual accommodation with or without additional support, some require transition into residential care, and others may remain in the unit for end-of-life care.

What is the cost for palliative care?

If you are a holder of a current Australian Medicare card, you will not be charged to receive treatment as a public patient in the Palliative Care Unit, or to be assessed as a public patient by the Palliative Care Consultation Service. For private patients, Medicare ineligible patients, overseas visitors and further information, please see [Patient Account Information](#).

How do I access palliative care at Northern Health?

The team looking after you at Northern Health may suggest involving palliative care in your treatment plan. You are also welcome to ask your doctor or nurse in the hospital about contacting our team if you think we can help with your care. We provide a range of services, including once-off assessments, linking people with community palliative care, ongoing review of patients in hospital,

and arranging transfer to the Palliative Care Unit. We see patients in the hospital wards, emergency department or who are attending outpatient clinic appointments with other specialists. In some cases, patients can attend our outpatient Symptom Management Clinic for an appointment to see a palliative care specialist.

Sometimes patients who are being looked after outside of Northern Health need to come to our Palliative Care Unit. Other healthcare providers, such as hospitals and community palliative care services, can contact the Palliative Care Unit to make a referral for admission. Talk with your doctor or care provider for more information about your options.

[How do I access palliative care at home?](#)

Patients requiring palliative care outside the hospital can be supported by a specialist Community Palliative Care Service, together with your own General Practitioner (GP). The Palliative Care team at Northern Health is unable to visit you at home, but can help link you with your local service when you go home from our hospitals or attend a Northern Health outpatient appointment. The Palliative Care Victoria website can help you find the right service for your area. Speak with your doctor or care provider for more information.