

Specialist palliative care team

Information for patients, relatives and carers

This leaflet has been created to answer some of the questions that you may have about palliative care and your referral to the specialist palliative care team. If you have any other questions, please feel free to contact us.

What is palliative care?

Palliative care aims to achieve the best quality of life for patients and their loved ones. This can involve controlling pain and other symptoms, as well as providing emotional and practical support. The specialist palliative care team supports patients and their loved ones throughout their illness journey, in some cases from diagnosis, during curative treatment and after treatment has finished.

Palliative care focuses on the whole person, not just on illness. It offers patients help with physical, psychological, spiritual and social needs. It recognises that loved ones may also need support and helps to address this as well.

Who are the specialist palliative care team?

The team consists of nurses who are specialised in palliative care and consultants in palliative medicine. We also train doctors and nurses in palliative care and they work as part of our team. The specialist palliative care team works alongside and in addition to the medical or surgical team looking after you.

How can the specialist palliative care team help me?

Our team can help by:

- offering advice and support on the management of symptoms, including pain, nausea and vomiting, fatigue and breathlessness
- providing psychological support and advice to you, your family and carers
- addressing religious, spiritual and cultural needs
- offering help with social and financial issues
- planning for discharge and liaising with community teams
- advance care planning – planning for future care and what you may or may not want if your health were to deteriorate
- supporting patients and their loved ones in the last days to hours of life

The specialist palliative care team will discuss any plans you may have made for your future care with you and your family. We will also discuss decisions and plans suggested by your medical team with you and your family. We can answer questions and address any other concerns you may have.

What is the palliative care multidisciplinary team (MDT)?

The specialist palliative care MDT consists of palliative care nurses and doctors, as well as other professionals such as dietitians, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, psychologists and chaplains. These professionals can offer a range of practical, emotional and spiritual support. If you would like to be referred to any of them, please let us know.

The specialist palliative care team MDT meets every week to discuss patients known to the team. We aim for everyone involved to share their expertise and understanding, even though you may not necessarily meet all the members of the team in person. The discussion is aimed to help us achieve the best possible care for you.

Who will coordinate my care?

During your stay, one of the members of the team will be your palliative care key worker and will coordinate your palliative care needs while you are in hospital.

Your key worker's name is: _____ **Telephone number:** _____

What happens when I leave hospital?

Palliative care patients are usually discharged from hospital to their own home. If you need practical help after leaving hospital, we will start planning and arranging this together with your hospital team, the discharge team and community services.

Our team works very closely with community specialist palliative care teams who visit patients in their own homes. These include community palliative care nurses (sometimes known as Macmillan nurses) and community palliative care consultants, often based at local hospices. They will work closely with others involved in your care, for example, your GP or district nurse.

Some palliative care patients are discharged to hospices or nursing homes, either for a short period for management of symptoms, for recovery, rehabilitation or end of life care. Hospices are usually for short stays only. Decisions about where to go after leaving hospital are made by you, your family and healthcare professionals together and are based on your individual needs and preferences.

Who to contact for more information

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or concerns:

We have teams at:

- Charing Cross Hospital: **020 3311 1402**
- Hammersmith Hospital: **020 3313 1531**
- St Marys Hospital: **020 3312 6011**

You can also contact the team by email: imperial.palliative-care@nhs.net

The team is available from Monday to Friday, 09.00 to 17.00. If you are calling outside of these hours please leave a message on the answerphone and a member of the team will contact you the next working day. If your concern is urgent please contact the ward team directly - ward staff can access specialist palliative care team support as required.

Additional information and support

Chaplaincy service

The chaplaincy team is made up Anglican, Jewish, Muslim, and Roman Catholic chaplains, and has contacts in the community to provide for the needs of other religious communities. The team is happy to make contact with and arrange a visit by a representative of a community known personally to the patient or those who are close to them.

We offer confidential religious, spiritual and pastoral care to all patients and visitors between 09.00 and 17.00 with a 24/7 urgent out-of-hours on-call service. To request a visit, speak to a member of your care team and ask them to contact the on-call chaplain. Patients can also call directly on **020 3312 1508** and leave a message but please be aware you may not receive a response until the next working day.

Interpreting services

Discussions and decisions about treatment options can be challenging, especially if English is not your first language or if you don't have good support networks. If you need a language or British Sign Language interpreter please let your care team know and they will organise this for you.

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3312 7777** (10.00 – 16.00, Monday to Friday). You can also email PALS at imperial.pals@nhs.net The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:
Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street
London W2 1NY
Email: ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net
Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team:
imperial.communications@nhs.net

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