

# Hospice Care for Patients with Alzheimer's Disease and Other Forms of Dementia

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**VITAS**<sup>®</sup>  
Healthcare

## When is the right time to ask about hospice?

A diagnosis of dementia is the first step in a long journey. Alzheimer's disease, which accounts for 60 to 80 percent of all dementia cases, progresses over an average of eight years, but may be much longer.<sup>12</sup> The patient transitions through stages of deterioration, which roughly parallel infant and childhood development in reverse. The essential skills acquired in the first months of life are eventually lost. This includes the ability to speak coherently, to walk and sit up, and to control the bowels and bladder; even swallowing becomes impaired.

One of many challenges for loved ones, caregivers and even physicians is knowing when an individual's condition is severe enough to consider hospice. Patients are eligible to receive hospice services when they have a life expectancy of six months or less. VITAS suggests dementia patients be evaluated for hospice if they:

- Can say only a few words
- Are dependent on others for all activities of daily living (toileting, feeding, dressing)
- Are no longer ambulatory
- Have been through several years of decline

Anyone can inquire about hospice services. You, your loved one or your physician may request an evaluation to see if hospice is an appropriate option for care. Call now to see how VITAS can help.

All hospice organizations are reimbursed in the same way, so they do not compete on cost. It is the quality of service and spectrum of choices that differentiate one hospice from another.

## Hospice for Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia

VITAS has set the standard for palliative treatment of dementia in all its various forms. The hospice plan of care for end-stage Alzheimer's and other types of dementia is specially designed for the treatment of a wide range of issues, including:

- Pain
- Hydration and nutrition
- Skin care
- Agitation
- Recurrent infection

The collaborative approach at VITAS is designed to do more than manage the patient's physical condition. We offer the emotional and spiritual support that is essential to so many loved ones and those who take care of patients with dementia. Hospice helps address their symptoms and stresses, which can include fatigue, depression, isolation, guilt and financial burdens. VITAS provides:

- **Support for tough decision making**—Families face tough choices in cases of dementia. How to handle hydration and nutrition? Should someone with recurrent infections continue receiving antibiotics? Hospice experts at VITAS help families and caregivers establish their specific goals of care, which will take into account all of the factors that impact the loved one's overall physical condition and his or her quality of life.
- **Education**—Watching a loved one go through the progression of dementia can be a bewildering process. VITAS educates families on the disease process so that they know what to expect and can hopefully achieve a greater sense of control.

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<sup>12</sup>Alzheimer's Association. "Types of Dementia." Web. <http://www.alz.org/dementia/types-of-dementia.asp>. Accessed July 17, 2014.

<sup>13</sup>Alzheimer's Association. "Progression Through the Brain." Web. <http://www.alz.org/brainatour/progression.asp>. Accessed July 17, 2014.

- **Emotional and spiritual assistance**—In the case of dementia, loved ones suffer chronic grief at the loss of the person they once knew. VITAS offers psycho-social counseling and spiritual support tailored to meet your specific needs.
- **Bereavement support**—Bereavement is the time of mourning after a loss. The hospice care team works with surviving loved ones to help them through the grieving process. Grief and bereavement resources are available for a year or more following a death.

## Levels of hospice care

A pioneer in the field of end-of-life care, VITAS is proud to offer unsurpassed service across all four levels of hospice care:

- **Routine Home Care**—available wherever the patient calls home (residence, nursing home, assisted living community)
- **Intensive Comfort Care**<sup>®</sup> (continuous care)—medical management in the home for up to 24 hours per day when medically appropriate
- **Inpatient Care**—when medical needs cannot be managed at home
- **Respite Care**—allows the patient a brief inpatient admission to provide caregivers a “respite”

## Who pays for VITAS services?

VITAS accepts Medicare, Medicaid/Medi-Cal, private insurance and other forms of reimbursement for its hospice services.

VITAS Healthcare can help.  
Call VITAS at 800.723.3233  
or visit [VITAS.com](http://VITAS.com)



## Your VITAS care team

Because patients who have end-stage Alzheimer's have a broad range of needs, their care is coordinated by a highly trained interdisciplinary team:

- **Physician** who works with the patient's primary care physician in controlling pain and symptoms
- **Registered nurse** who is skilled in assessing and managing pain
- **Social worker** who provides emotional support and helps with financial issues and planning
- **Hospice aide** who can help with personal care and hygiene, light housekeeping, light laundry and occasional shopping
- **Chaplain** who works with your family's own clergy and offers spiritual support
- **Community volunteer** trained by VITAS to offer time and companionship
- **Bereavement specialist** who offers grief and loss support and helps with memorial services and other care for loved ones

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## Download Our Free Hospice Discussion Guide



- Make the right decisions for you and your loved ones
  - Get answers to your hospice questions
  - Learn how to start the hospice conversation
- Find out more at [HospiceCanHelp.com](http://HospiceCanHelp.com)

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