

Care at home and away

You may want to be cared for at home.
This is often possible, but not always.

Things to consider

- How much help do I need?
- Do I have family and friends who can help?
- Are there homecare services? A doctor, nurse or nurse practitioner in the community to support my care?
- Do I need special equipment, medicines, oxygen or supplies?
- Who will order and prepare my medications? Where will they be safely stored? Who will help me take them?
- Do I have a health directive or advanced care plan? A substitute decision-maker?
- Do I have a ‘letter of anticipated death’ signed by the doctor in case I die at home?
- How will I get home? Can I travel?

Things to do

- Talk to your doctor, nurses and family members about where you want to be cared for.
- Ask for a meeting to make a plan.
- Make sure the equipment, medications and home care services you need are in place before discharge.
- Find out who will organize and pay for your transportation.
- Make sure the people who will be caring for you learn how to do everything necessary. This includes things like giving medications, using equipment and oxygen safely, changing dressings, colostomy and catheter care.
- Have a copy of your health care directive at home.
- Ensure that a ‘letter of anticipated death’ is signed by the doctor and sent to the RCMP, medical examiner’s office and funeral home.



“Sometimes care is just too complex for families to manage at home. When you’re providing palliative care for someone at home, it’s a 24/7 job.”

Debbie, Nurse
Waycobah First Nation, Nova Scotia

Care away from home

If you can't go home, ask your health care team how your traditions and spiritual practices can be honoured in the hospital.

- Bring items from home into your hospital room – photos, a special blanket, cards, a memory box, herbs, ceremonial objects.
- Traditional foods for you to smell and taste and for your family to enjoy.
- Remember that you and your family remain in control of your health care.
- Ask to be involved in care planning that respects your wishes, beliefs and traditions.
- Let the community know how they can help.
- Ask for a room where family and community members can gather.
- Ask if there are Indigenous Elders, healers, spiritual care advisors who can help with ceremonies such as smudging or prayers.

“One thing that gets missed is when family can no longer cope, and they have to go to the hospital then they feel like they've failed. I try to remind families what a good job they've done. You've brought them this far.”

Dr. Amy Montour

Six Nations of the Grand River, Ontario

“Professionals can work with the Elders and healers to make time where family can participate in ceremonies if they want to. That is really honouring every single person in that circle about what their needs and wants are as they are grieving at the end of their loved ones' lives.”

Elder Roberta Price

Coast Salish peoples, British Columbia



A CRY FROM THE DEEP BY BY COLLEEN GRAY

To see the Indigenous Voices video series and to learn more about living with serious illness and grief, go to LivingMyCulture.ca

Also available:

- What is palliative care?
- Compassionate caring
- Care at home and away
- Helping you feel better
- What to expect
- Honouring wishes
- Making memories
- Grief and letting go

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