

Choosing hospice care isn't always easy

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Best time to check out options is *before* you need them, suggests expert.

(HealthDay)—Hospice care is an option for people who have terminal illnesses, but choosing the right hospice isn't always easy, experts say.

"Choosing a hospice to care for yourself or a loved one in the final months or even days of life is an important and stressful process," J. Donald Schumacher, president and CEO of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO), said in a news release from the group.

"Each hospice offers unique services and partners with specific community providers—so it's important to contact the hospices in your area and ask them questions to find the one with the services and support that are right for you," he explained.

You may be able to get a recommendation from your doctor, other [health care providers](#) or relatives and friends that have used hospice services in the past.

The NHPCO outlined some questions you need to ask when choosing a hospice:

- Is the facility Medicare-certified, is it accredited by a national organization, and when was the last state or federal survey of the program conducted?
- What services can the hospice be expected to provide and how are services provided after-hours?
- How and where does the hospice provide short-term inpatient care and what services do hospice volunteers offer?
- How long does enrollment typically take once someone asks the hospice for services?

The question of when to begin [hospice care](#) must be decided by patients and families based on their unique needs, but it's a good idea to learn about [hospice](#) care options long before it's needed, the NHPCO suggests.

More information: Learn more about hospice care from the [Hospice Foundation of America](#).

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