

Hospice Care for Patients with Kidney Failure



VITAS[®]
Healthcare

When is the right time to consider hospice?

The National Kidney Foundation estimates more than 615,000 Americans received treatment for kidney failure, also called end-stage renal disease, in 2011.¹ Some kidney failure patients receive a transplant. Many more go on dialysis, sometimes for many years. At some point, patients may wish to stop dialysis because they have concluded it is no longer improving or even maintaining their quality of life. Some patients opt not to have dialysis at all, because for them, the burden simply outweighs the benefits. That's when VITAS can help.

The first thing patients and families who are considering hospice want to know is how long a person with kidney failure can live without dialysis. The answer varies with each patient, depending on the amount of kidney function, how severe the symptoms are and the patient's overall medical condition. With comprehensive end-of-life care from VITAS, patients can be at peace with their symptoms controlled. The goal of hospice is to relieve suffering, provide comfort, promote dignity and facilitate closure for patients and families.

Anyone can inquire about hospice services. The patient, the patient's family or primary 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.

African Americans at risk

Due to elevated rates of diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease, African Americans have an increased risk of developing kidney failure. In fact, they are three times more likely to experience kidney failure than Caucasians. African Americans constitute more than 32 percent of all patients in the U.S. receiving dialysis for kidney failure, but only represent 13 percent of the overall U.S. population.²

Hospice care for kidney failure

While a high percentage of kidney failure patients spend their final days in the hospital, those who elect hospice care are more likely to have the option of living and dying in the comfort of home. VITAS brings care to patients wherever they are—in a private residence, nursing home, assisted living community or hospital.

The hospice plan of care addresses the patient's physical and psychosocial well-being and seeks to manage a wide variety of kidney failure symptoms, including:

- Pain and stiffness as a result of fluid in the joints
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite and nausea
- Itching (pruritus)
- Difficulty breathing
- Difficulty sleeping
- Anxiety and depression

¹National Kidney Foundation*. "Chronic Kidney Disease — a Growing Problem." Web. <http://www.kidney.org/news/newsroom/factsheets/African-Americans-and-CKD.cfm>. Accessed July 24, 2014.

²National Kidney Foundation*. "African Americans and Kidney Disease." Web. <http://www.kidney.org/news/newsroom/factsheets/African-Americans-and-CKD.cfm>. Accessed July 24, 2014.

Withdrawing from dialysis, or choosing to forgo it altogether, is often an emotionally difficult process. Hospice offers emotional and spiritual support for patients and their loved ones. VITAS provides:

- **Education**—As patients grow weaker and symptoms increase, caregivers and loved ones can sometimes feel overwhelmed or helpless. VITAS coaches families on how to care for their loved one.
- **Emotional and spiritual assistance**—VITAS offers psychosocial counseling and spiritual support tailored to meet each individual's needs.
- **Bereavement support**—Bereavement is the time of mourning after a loss. The hospice care team helps surviving loved ones 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**[®] (continuous care)—medical management for acute symptom 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.



Your VITAS care team

Because patients with kidney failure 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 the patient'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

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

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

For more information call 800.723.3233

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