



How do I know if it's time for Hospice?

This guide will help you determine if a patient is ready for hospice.

Physician's Quick Guide

Ask yourself:

- Do you expect that your patient has a life expectancy of six months or less?
- Does the patient have a terminal illness?

Below are clues to a six-months-or-less life expectancy.

Patient should have one or more of the following symptoms:

1. Rapid decline in function
2. Multiple hospitalizations/emergency department visits in the past 12 months
3. One or more life-threatening infections in the past six months
4. Decreased food and fluid intake
5. Unintentional weight loss
6. Malnutrition or recurrent dehydration
7. Aspiration with swallowing
8. Poor quality of life
9. Desire to stop life-prolonging treatments
10. Decline associated with several significant comorbid conditions

Disease-Specific Criteria

Heart Disease	Pulmonary Disease
1. Cardiac symptoms (dyspnea or angina) at rest or with minimal activity, despite optimal treatment (or is not a candidate for optimal treatment)	1. Disabling shortness of breath while at rest
2. Congestive heart failure due to cardiomyopathy or severe diastolic dysfunction	2. Activity severely limited by dyspnea and/or weakness
3. Critical valvular disease, or advanced, inoperable coronary artery disease	3. Frequent emergency department or hospital visits for symptoms or infections
4. Frequent emergency department visits/hospitalizations	4. Unacceptable or poor quality of life for the patient or no desire for life-prolonging treatments
5. Serious arrhythmias, syncope, previous arrest, and/or ejection fraction of <20% -- all support eligibility	5. Weight loss, worsening heart failure, or symptomatic pulmonary hypertension
6. New York Heart Association Class IV	6. Increasing oxygen needs or forced expiratory volume (FEV) <30% of predicted
	7. Hypoxemia – Oxygen saturation ≤ 88

Dementia	HIV/AIDS
1. Unable to ambulate without assistance and dependent in most activities of daily living (ADLs)	1. CD4 count <25 cells/mcl and viral load >100,000 copies/ml
2. Unable to speak more than six words at a time	2. Significant weight loss, progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy (PML), visceral Kaposi's sarcoma, renal failure, central nervous system or systemic lymphoma and/or infection not responding to treatment 3. Declining function despite treatment or nontreatment
3. Evidence of severely impaired nutrition, recent serious infection or skin breakdown > stage 3-4	
4. Significant comorbid conditions	
5. Functional assessment staging tool (FAST Scale), stage 7 or beyond	
6. 10% weight loss over past six months	
Renal Disease	Debility - One or more
1. Creatinine > 8mg/dl (gmg/dl if diabetic) or increasing rapidly	1. Body Mass Index (BMI) < 22kg/m2 and decreasing
2. Creatinine clearance <10cc/min	2. Weight loss of > 10% total body weight in six months or less
3. No plans for transplant or dialysis-- or stopping dialysis	3. Nutritional impairment – decreased food intake or aspiration
4. Estimated glomerular filtration rate (GFR) <10ml/min	4. Rapidly declining function
Parkinson's Disease	Stroke/Coma
1. Evidence of severely impaired nutrition, recent serious infection or skin breakdown > stage II	1. Unable to take adequate food orally and no artificial nutrition planned
2. Dysphagia, aspiration, weight loss and/or rapid decline	2. No expectation for meaningful recovery
3. Significant comorbid conditions	3. Aspiration pneumonia or other serious infection
Cancer	4. Karnofsky Performance Scale (KPS) or Palliative Performance Scale (PPS) <40%
1. Known metastases, weight loss, systemic symptoms or declining function	5. 10% weight loss over past six months or 7.5% over past three months
2. Interventions focused on symptom relief rather than prolonging life	6. Serum Albumen <2.5 gm/dl
Liver Disease	ALS - One or more
1. International normalized ratio (INR) >1.5 and serum albumin <2.5 gm/dl	1. Impaired respiration (dyspnea at rest, FVC <30% of predicted or inadequate cough) with no plans for ventilation
2. Ascites, jaundice, encephalopathy, hepatorenal syndrome and/or GI bleeding without plans for transfusion	2. Impaired nutrition, dysphagia, aspiration, or weight loss (no tube feeding unless meets other criteria)
3. Impaired nutrition	3. Rapid decline in function in past six months
	4. Life-threatening infections

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