

Hospice Admission Guidelines

Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias



At A Glance

Dementia is the third leading diagnosis (15.4%) for referrals to hospice care.¹

Hospice focuses on managing long-term symptoms, addressing pain, and reducing anxiety and worry for patients and their families.

Alzheimer's disease, which affects 5.8 million Americans, is the 5th leading cause of death in patients over 65.²

One in three older US adults who die each year have a diagnosis of dementia.²

Why Choose Hospice

Alzheimer's disease and other progressive dementias are life-altering and eventually fatal conditions for which curative therapy is not available. Hospice teams provide personalized physical, psychosocial and spiritual support to patients and their families/caregivers.

Hospice care for Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia focuses on relieving pain, managing difficult symptoms, improving quality of life and reducing anxiety for patients and their families. Hospice provides equipment (specialized chairs, hospital beds, lifts to transfer patients safely) and up to 5 days of respite care for the patient when caregivers need a break.

A high-quality hospice provider will design a plan that addresses pain, shortness of breath, agitation and recurrent infections—all common conditions associated with dementia.

Timely and appropriate identification of hospice-eligible patients increases the likelihood that patients and their families will benefit from compassionate, end-of-life care.

What Hospice Offers

- Comfort care provided in the patient's preferred setting of care
- Medication and supplies delivered to the patient, covered by Medicare
- Inpatient care when the patient's symptoms and pain cannot be managed at home
- Intensive Comfort Care[®], when medically necessary, provides around-the-clock hospice care to manage acute symptoms in the patient's preferred care setting so the patient can avoid hospitalization
- 24/7 access to hospice clinicians

Not sure if your patient is hospice-eligible?

Contact VITAS for an evaluation to determine whether hospice is an appropriate option for care.

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Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias (Cont.)

Alzheimer's Disease

Eligible patients must have:

Alzheimer's that is FAST 7a³

- Speaking ability limited to 5 words or less

Plus either:

- Disease-related complication(s)
- Significant comorbidity (e.g., heart failure, advanced cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)

Other Forms of Dementia (Cerebrovascular Disease, Lewy Body Dementia, etc.)

Progressive functional disability:

- Dependence for 3 of 6 Activities of Daily Living (ADLs)

Disease of a specific severity and either:

- Disease-related complication(s)
- Significant comorbidity (e.g., heart failure, advanced cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)

Disease-related Complications Can Include:

- Pneumonia/aspiration pneumonia
- Pyelonephritis/UTI
- Sepsis
- Febrile episode
- Difficulty eating or dysphagia
- Poor nutritional status and/or dehydration
- Feeding tube (decision)
- Pressure sores
- Hip fracture
- Delirium
- Recurrent hospitalization(s) for disease-related complications

Referrals are secure and simple with the VITAS app.



To further assist with prognosis, the VITAS app contains an interactive Palliative Performance Scale that quickly quantifies hospice eligibility based on a patient's functional status.

1. Alzheimer's Association (2019). Facts and Figures. Retrieved from: <https://www.alz.org/alzheimers-dementia/facts-figures>
2. National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (2018). Facts and Figure 2018 edition. Retrieved from: https://www.nhpco.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/2018_NHPCO_Facts_Figures.pdf
3. Diagnosis, Management and Treatment of Dementia. American Medical Association, 1999.