

When is a Person with Dementia and/or Alzheimer's Ready for Hospice

As a caregiver, knowing when our loved ones with dementia and/or Alzheimer's are ready for Hospice care can be challenging and stressful for us. Below is a list of changes to watch for in your loved one. According to the National Hospice Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO) Functional Assessment Staging Test (FAST), if they show all the following, it might be time to ask your doctor about a hospice referral. Additionally, family members can contact hospice at any time, and do not need to wait until it is recommended by the patient's physician.

- Unable to ambulate without assistance
- Unable to dress without assistance
- Speech Ability limited
- Unable to bathe properly
- Unable to sit up without assistance
- Unable to toilet by him/herself
- Unable to control bladder or bowels (wets or soils self and isn't always aware and wears briefs)

Bringing in hospice care can help with the physical and emotional demands of caregiving. When a person goes on hospice, they are assigned a team of caregivers comprised of Nurses, Aides, Social Workers, and Chaplains. The nurses will be able to adjust any medication needs and care plans as the individual's needs change. Hospice aides can help with bathing, grooming, and other personal care. Social workers can help the family and patient navigate the process with much needed resources. Lastly, Chaplains and bereavement specialists can help the family with any emotional or spiritual needs.

If you are not sure if it is time for Hospice, you can contact our Pathways Program. Our Pathways Facilitator can help guide you through the process and answer any questions or concerns you might have. Our Pathways Program is to help families and individuals who are not quite ready for Hospice care, but need someone to walk beside them prior to Hospice as well as navigating the steps of Hospice care.

If you have any questions or concerns, you may contact The Hospice of East Texas at any time to schedule a hospice consultation or evaluation for your loved one at: **903-266-3400** or **Pathways 903-565-9230**