

10 Myths about Palliative Care



Palliative care is still misunderstood. Here are 10 common myths we often encounter. Help dispel these myths by sharing the facts with family members and friends, colleagues, patients, and clients.



Myth 1: Palliative care makes death occur sooner.

Fact: Palliative care does not make death occur sooner. It helps improve comfort and quality of life from diagnosis until death.



Myth 6: Pain is a part of dying.

Fact: Pain is not always a part of dying. If pain is experienced near end of life, there are many ways it can be addressed.



Myth 2: Palliative care is only for people dying of cancer.

Fact: Palliative care can benefit people who have been diagnosed with any illness that may shorten life. Palliative care can also benefit their families and friends.



Myth 7: Taking pain medications in palliative care, leads to addiction.

Fact: Keeping people comfortable often requires increased doses of pain medication as the body gets used to the medication. It is not addiction.



Myth 3: People in palliative care who stop eating die of starvation.

Fact: People with advanced illnesses often don't experience hunger or thirst as healthy people do. People who stop eating die of their illness, not of starvation.



Myth 8: Morphine makes death happen faster.

Fact: Morphine, or medication similar to it, is used to help keep patients comfortable. In proper doses, morphine does not make death happen sooner.



Myth 4: Palliative care is only provided in a hospital.

Fact: People can receive palliative care in a variety of locations, including at home, in a long-term care facility, in a hospice, or in a hospital.



Myth 9: Palliative care means the patient's doctor has given up and there is no hope.

Fact: Palliative care providers help people achieve their best quality of life, for the rest of their life. Hope changes from curing the disease, to living life as fully as possible.



Myth 5: We need to protect children from being exposed to death and dying.

Fact: Talking with children early on in someone's illness, and providing honest and clear information that is age appropriate, is the best way to protect them. Like adults, children also benefit from having time to say goodbye to people who are important to them.



Myth 10: If my family member or friend doesn't die at home, I'm letting them down.

Fact: Sometimes a person's needs cannot be met at home despite the best efforts. Ensuring that the best care is delivered, regardless of setting, is not a failure.