

Top 10 Myths of Palliative Care

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If I accept to receive palliative care, my doctors have given up on me.

Palliative care doesn't mean that doctors have given up on a patient. When palliative care is proposed, it means that the healthcare team has realized that the disease is not curable and that death can't be avoided. By offering palliative care, you are being offered the chance to live out your remaining days as comfortably as they can be, with the care of experts in end-of-life care.

Palliative care means no more treatment.

When a palliative care team takes over the care of a patient, treatment doesn't automatically stop. Treatment and therapies can continue, but they have a different goal. For example, if you have cancer, you still may be offered radiotherapy. However, the radiotherapy isn't to cure the cancer but to help shrink the tumor that is causing pain or discomfort.

Palliative care is for people with cancer.

Palliative care is offered to anyone who is dying of a chronic or terminal illness. While many people who receive palliative care are dying from cancer, people can have AIDS, heart disease, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, and many other fatal illnesses.

Palliative care is for old people.

Many children are diagnosed with terminal illnesses. They may be born with a birth defect, such as a heart defect, or a disease that will cause them to die as a child or they may develop a terminal illness later on in their childhood. Palliative care is an important part of their medical care as they reach the end-of-life.

Palliative care means I'm very close to death.

When someone is transferred to the palliative care team, they may die within days or weeks, or they may live for considerably longer. Palliative care isn't offered according to the amount of time you have left, but according to how much you need the services of a palliative care team approach.

In palliative care, they dope you up with narcotics or opioids and you sleep until you die.

Pain is a big issue in palliative care. With some diseases, there is often a high level of pain, but in other diseases, there isn't. If your disease does cause severe pain, you may be treated with narcotics or opioids, but only if you need it and only at the dosages you need it. The goal of palliative care isn't to dope you up, but to make you as comfortable as possible during the end-of-life period.

If I get morphine, I will stop breathing.

Morphine does slow down respirations in many people. But, proper doses of morphine usually doesn't cause someone to stop breathing.

I can only get palliative care if I'm in the hospital.

Palliative care services are offered in many communities. Care at end-of-life can be given in a hospital, stand-alone residence, or at home, depending on the resources available.

My family can't help if I'm in palliative care.

One of the benefits of palliative care is that it's not only for the dying person. The palliative care team cares for the dying patient and his or her family and friends. The care at the end-of-life isn't just about physical comfort, but it's about emotional and psychological support for everyone who loves and is part of the life of the dying patient.

I will have no control if I agree to palliative care.

Palliative care is a specialty in medicine, just as is cardiology, pediatrics, and obstetrics. None of the specialties take over, they specialize in helping the patients under their care. If you are a patient in palliative care, you are consulted and are part of the team for as long as you are able to be.