



Northern Health Palliative Care

Palliative Care Myths

Myth #1: Treatment stops when palliative care starts

Fact: Patients can receive palliative care at *any* stage of an illness. Patients receiving palliative care can also receive other types of treatment for their illness including surgery, dialysis and chemotherapy.

Myth #2: Pain is a part of dying

Fact: Pain is *not* always a part of dying. If pain is present near end of life there are many ways that it can be managed.

Myth #3: Opioids (such as morphine) speed up dying

Fact: Morphine, or similar medications, *do not* speed up dying but are used at proper doses to treat pain, reduce shortness of breath and maintain comfort.

Myth #4: Taking pain medication will lead to addiction

Fact: Keeping people comfortable may require increasing doses of pain medication but this is in response, and relative to, treating a symptom. This is not addiction.

Myth #5: People who stop eating and drinking in palliative care die of starvation

Fact: People with advanced illness do not experience hunger or thirst the same as healthy people. Eating and drinking less is the body's natural progression towards end of life.

Myth #6: Palliative care means that health care providers have "given up" and there is no hope

Fact: Palliative care involves providing care where the shift is from curing the illness to ensuring the best quality of life.

Myth #7: Palliative care speeds up the dying process

Fact: Palliative care does *not* hasten death. It aims to improve comfort and quality of life from diagnosis of an advanced illness until end of life.

Myth #8: Palliative care is only provided in hospital

Fact: Palliative care can be provided in a variety of locations, including hospital, home, long-term care, and hospice.

Myth #11: Injections are better than oral medication

Fact: Injections are only required when a patient can no longer take oral medication. Oral medication is just as effective as injections and the long-acting forms of oral medication can mean less frequent administration and more convenience.

References:
Canadian Virtual Hospice Team. (2019, May). 10 Myths about Palliative Care. *Canadian Virtual Hospice*. https://www.virtualhospice.ca/en_US/Main+Site+Navigation/Home/Topics/Topics/What+Is+Palliative+Care_/10+Myths+about+Palliative+Care.aspx

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