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## PALLIATIVE CARE DEFINITION

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**Palliative care (pronounced pal-lee-uh-tiv) is specialized medical care for people living with a serious illness. Care is focused on providing relief from the symptoms and stress of a serious illness. The goal is to improve quality of life for both the patient and the family.**

- Specially trained team provides care in a holistic manner
- Additional layer of support based on needs of the patient
- Appropriate at any age and at any stage in a serious illness
- Can be provided along with curative treatment

To help you better understand what Palliative Care is and is not, read on for common myths and facts:

### Top 8 Myths about Palliative Care

**Myth 1:** Palliative Care is for people who are at the end of their lives

**Truth:** Palliative care should be integrated early in disease process while disease modifying treatments are being offered to maximize quality of life and combat symptoms and suffering.

**Myth 2:** Palliative Care and Hospice are the same type of care

**Truth:** Although both types of care focus on improving quality of life of patient and family through expert symptom and supportive care, palliative care is offered to all individuals at any stage of disease while disease modifying or curative treatments are being offered. Hospice care is usually offered at the end stage of disease when curative or disease modifying treatments are no longer effective or felt beneficial by patient and physician. For more information about palliative or



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hospice care in Maryland, [visit the HPCNM website](#) and click on the Consumer Care portal.

**Myth 3:** Palliative care is only used to treat pain and they will just give me morphine

**Truth:** Pain is a common reason for a palliative care referral and sometimes opioids (pain medications) are prescribed for pain control. However, palliative care looks to use medications and non-medications to treat pain such as complementary therapies (massage, acupuncture, Reiki, pet therapy, etc.) and other types of non-pain medications that help with pain control.

There are many other symptoms an individual could be experiencing that would qualify them for a palliative care consult: nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, constipation, loss of appetite, trouble sleeping, anxiety, depression, itching, restlessness.....to name a few.

Referrals are also made to help with non-physical types of suffer such as anxiety, depression, spiritual distress, and other concerns that may impact quality of life of patient and family.

**Myth 4:** Palliative care sounds like it would be expensive for me

**Truth:** Palliative care is a medical specialty just like every other in the medical field (i.e cardiology, neurology, oncology, etc.) In the community, insurance covers palliative care visits the same way they would cover other specialty visits. If concerned, contact your insurance company before scheduling a visit in the community.

**Myth 5:** When I work with palliative care, I will no longer see my other physicians

**Truth:** Palliative care providers are specialty trained consultants that work with your other providers to assist in the management of your symptoms and quality of life. They do not replace your other providers.

The palliative care consult team will work with your primary team to come up with a treatment plan.



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**Myth 6:** Palliative care is only for people with cancer.

**Truth: This care can help anyone, no matter what the serious illness or chronic disease.** Care is available for people with kidney, liver, lung and heart disease, diabetes, dementia, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, rheumatoid arthritis, cancer, and many others.

**Myth 7:** You cannot receive other treatments such as chemotherapy while receiving palliative care.

**Truth: People can continue receiving curative treatments for their illness.** The goals are to control symptoms such as pain and improve your quality of life.

**Myth 8:** Palliative care means my doctor has given up hope for me.

**Truth: This care does not mean giving up.** It is an extra layer of support and a way to help maximize your quality of life, explore options for care, and assist in navigating the healthcare systems. You are able to establish goals as your illness progresses or your course changes—all the while, helping you live each moment as fully as possible.

For more information on Palliative Care, visit [www.hnmd.org](http://www.hnmd.org)