



What is Palliative Care?

1 | Palliative care is...

- for every age and every stage
- about relieving suffering
- about the whole person
- about choice, autonomy and dignity
- about living every moment you have
- care for the caregiver
- about the community of care



Video: Alberta Health Services (2019) "O'tsisina – Joe's Family Story"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DGXwPv99hfc>

Your turn: What aspects of palliative care are highlighted in this video?

2 | Common myths & misunderstandings about palliative care

Myth: Palliative care makes death occur sooner.

Fact: Palliative care does not hasten death. It provides comfort and the best possible quality of life.



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

Fact: Palliative care can benefit people diagnosed with any serious illness, including those who have months or years to live.



Myth: Pain is a part of dying.

Fact: For the most part, pain can be controlled. Pain control is an area of expertise in palliative care.



Myth: Morphine makes death happen faster.

Fact: Appropriate doses of morphine keep patients comfortable but do not hasten death. The person declines because of the illness, with or without the morphine.

Myth: People can't have palliative care and Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD).

Fact: A person can receive palliative care while also considering or requesting MAiD.



Myth: Palliative care is only provided in a hospital.

Fact: Palliative care can be provided in a variety of locations.



Myth: Palliative care means my health care team has given up and there is no hope for me.

Fact: Palliative care is not giving up. It is active care to relieve the symptoms and stress of a serious illness.



References:

Canadian Virtual Hospice (2021). "10 Myths about Palliative Care."

https://www.virtualhospice.ca/Assets/10%20Myths%20about%20Palliative%20Care%20-%20Infographic%202021_20211108203352.pdf

Canadian Virtual Hospice (2021). "Understanding Medical Assistance in Dying."

<https://www.virtualhospice.ca/maid/media/yafpybhp/maid-individuals-and-families.pdf>

Video: Pallium Canada (2014) "Better Early Than Late" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-SzA-kWB8-s>

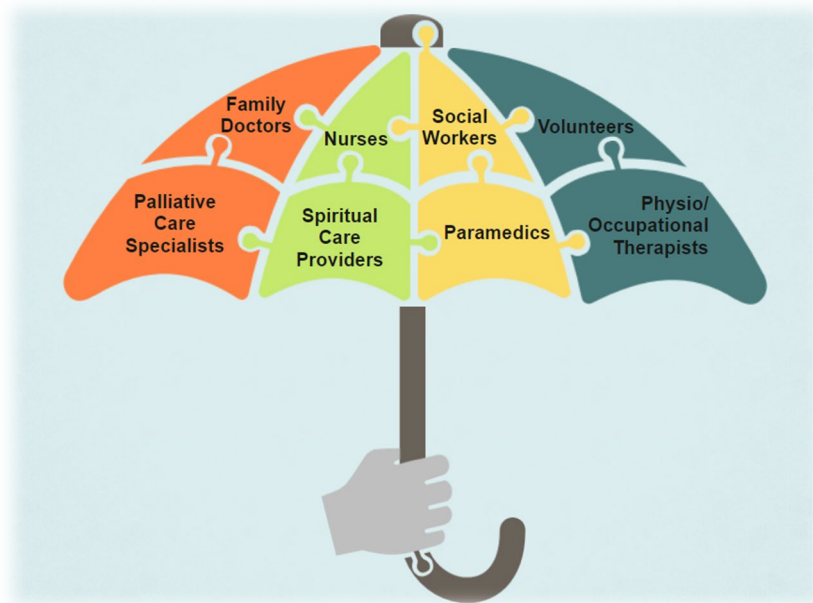
Your turn: Do any of these facts surprise you? Why is it important that people understand palliative care?

3 | What does the World Health Organization say about palliative care?

- Palliative care improves quality of life.
- Palliative care is a human right.
- Worldwide, only about 14% of people who need palliative care currently receive it.

Reference: WHO (2020). "Palliative Care Fact Sheet." <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/palliative-care>

4 | Who provides palliative care?



Covenant Health Palliative Institute (2023). *Understanding Palliative Care* module.

Types of palliative care:

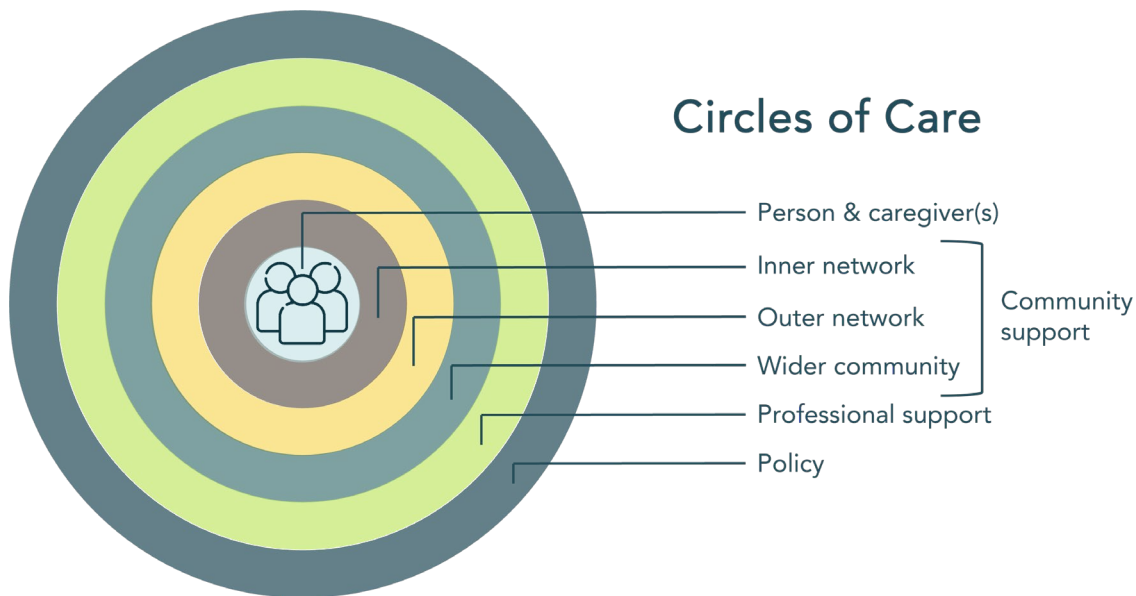
Generalist palliative care can meet most needs and is provided by a person's regular health care team. Palliative care is not the main focus of their practice.

Specialist palliative care is available for people with complex needs. It is provided by health care providers whose practice is focused on palliative care.

How is palliative care accessed?

- Through a family doctor or primary care provider.
- Access to specialist palliative care services varies by health zone. Learn more at the Alberta Health Services Palliative Care page (<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/info/page14778.aspx>) under “Finding Services in Your Zone.”

How can the community help?



Adapted from: Abel J, Walter T, Carey LB et al. (2013). Circles of care. *BMJ Supportive & Palliative Care*. Vol. 3, No. 4.

Your turn: Have you ever thought of yourself as part of the palliative care team?

Improve your knowledge

Canadian Virtual Hospice (<http://www.virtualhospice.ca/>) – Support and information about advanced illness, palliative care, dying and grief.

My Health Alberta: Palliative Care (<https://myhealth.alberta.ca/palliative-care>) – Health information and tools regarding palliative care in Alberta.

Compassionate Alberta (<https://compassionatealberta.ca/learn-about-palliative-care>) – Tools and resources from the Covenant Health Palliative Institute to help Albertans learn about palliative care.

Support is available

Get help during a crisis (24/7):

AHS Mental Health Help Line

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/findhealth/Service.aspx?id=6810&serviceAtFacilityID=1047134>
1-877-303-2642

Connect with community services (24/7):

2-1-1 Alberta

<https://ab.211.ca/>
2-1-1

Access support programs:

Alberta Hospice Palliative Care Association

<https://ahpca.ca/>
403-206-9938

Find a psychologist:

Psychologists' Association of Alberta

<https://psychologistsassociation.ab.ca/members/>
1-888-424-0297

Build community support

To find upcoming PalliLearn courses and additional resources to help build community support for people who are sick, dying, caregiving or grieving visit: compassionatealberta.ca/build-community-support