

# MEDfacts

An Educational Health Series From National Jewish Health®



## Palliative Care

### What is Palliative Care?

Palliative care is a type of medicine that focuses on the physical, emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual needs of people who have a serious illness, including cancer, end-stage respiratory disease and end-stage organ failure. Palliative care relieves suffering, helps improve people's tolerance for curative treatment, eases transitions when curative treatment is no longer an option and improves the quality of life for patients and their families. Palliative care addresses the discomforts caused by symptoms of disease and side effects of treatment, the goals of care and the hopes of patients and family members.

At National Jewish Health, patients at any stage or treatment can receive palliative care. While palliative care services can be initiated at any stage of a serious illness, hospice services become available when curative treatment is no longer an option and a doctor feels that patient's prognosis may be limited to six months or less. At National Jewish Health, a team of board-certified hospice and palliative care providers, social workers and clinical dietitians is available to discuss your unique health care needs and identify the services that are right for you.

### Palliative care can help...

- Relieve breathlessness so you can walk more easily
- Decrease pain so you can be more active
- Reduce nausea so you can eat and drink
- Improve constipation so you feel more comfortable
- Restore sleep so you have more energy during the day

### ...So you can focus on your

- Hopes
- Concerns
- Treatment

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## How can Palliative Care Help You?

Palliative care aims to improve your:

**Physical comfort** – Pain, fatigue, nausea, shortness of breath, constipation and insomnia can decrease your quality of life. Managing these and other symptoms can improve your physical well-being, functional status and ability to continue treatment.

**Emotional comfort** – Living with a serious illness can be a source of anxiety, frustration, grief, loss and depression. Finding peace of mind can help make the challenges of your disease and its treatment easier to tolerate. Working with a psychiatrist and participating in support groups can offer outlets for emotional support.

**Social comfort** – Changes in your relationships with family, friends and colleagues can be a source of distress. Offering support and facilitating conversations with family and friends can relieve some of the isolation and help those important to you understand what is happening to you.

**Intellectual comfort** – Open discussion about your disease and its treatment can help you gain insight into the meaning of your disease and its role in your life.

**Spiritual comfort** – Identifying resources in your faith tradition can help provide additional sources of support.

**Advance care planning** – Assistance with preparing or updating your advance directives, including identifying your surrogate decision-maker, can give you a sense of control over your disease.

**Access to community resources** – Making referrals to outside resources, including home physical and occupational therapy, home palliative care and hospice services at home or facilities, can expand your treatment team to include resources you may need outside of National Jewish Health.

For more information on the Palliative Care program at National Jewish Health, please call 303.270.2393.

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