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facts about palliative care in aged care



1

Palliative care focuses on symptom management

There are many misconceptions about palliative care. It's important to understand that:

- end-of-life care is only one part of palliative care
- a person can receive palliative care at any age, in addition to ongoing treatment
- a rising incidence of life-limiting chronic illnesses means that more older adults will require palliative care.



2

A multidisciplinary approach is central to palliative care

A multidisciplinary care team allows for shared decision-making, responsibility and leadership. It may include:

- medical practitioners, nurses and pharmacists
- psychologists, social workers and chaplains
- physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech pathologists and other allied health professionals.



3

Physiotherapists provide palliative care in a variety of settings

Physiotherapists support people:

- in residential aged care, addressing common concerns such as mobility impairment, pain and incontinence
- in hospitals, improving and stabilising patient function and slowing down functional deterioration
- in the community, including through home visits and group classes, improving physical function and independence.



4

Palliative care physiotherapy focuses on improving quality of life

Physiotherapy in palliative care can:

- reduce fatigue and increase physical activity and functionality
- manage symptoms including pain, motor deficits, constipation, breathlessness, lymphoedema and depression
- offer interventions such as exercise prescription, massage, myofascial release and respiratory physiotherapy
- contribute to an advanced care plan that draws on the skills of the multidisciplinary team to accurately define end-of-life preferences.



5

Physical activity can be beneficial in palliative care

To help people maintain function and achieve their quality-of-life goals, palliative care physiotherapists:

- are guided by the patient's symptoms and what is important to them
- acknowledge that activity levels and goals are likely to change over time
- assist with balancing physical activity and avoiding complications from risk factors.



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