

Opioid Myths and Facts

Myths (Wrong)	Facts (Correct)
Opioid pain medications should be saved and used only when pain is severe.	Pain medication should be given on a regular basis to ease pain and avoid unnecessary suffering.
Morphine will stop breathing.	When used as prescribed, opioids relieve discomfort and are carefully monitored by your hospice team.
If opioid pain medication is stopped, the patient will go through severe withdrawal.	Most people in hospice care continue to need some opioid medication, so withdrawal from suddenly stopping is unlikely to occur.
If someone in hospice takes opioid pain medications, they will become addicted.	Addiction is compulsive use for psychological effects. Using opioids for pain and comfort at this stage of life is not considered addiction.
A person will develop tolerance to pain medications and they will stop working.	Tolerance may develop slowly over time. If needed, the dose or type of opioid can be adjusted safely to continue providing comfort.
Morphine means death is near.	Morphine is used to treat pain and shortness of breath. It is used to improve comfort, not to cause death.

This educational material is intended to support caregivers and families. Always discuss medication questions or concerns with your hospice team.