

End of Life Care for

BUDDHIST

PATIENTS



KEY POINTS

- Buddhism is a rapidly growing global religion with an expansive and diverse belief system that finds its roots in the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, revered as the Buddha or the Awakened One.
- Throughout the variations within Buddhism, you will often find the consistent characteristics of non-violence, an absence of strict rules, openness to differences, and a prevalent practice of meditation.
- Another fundamental belief in Buddhism is that all individuals possess inherent goodness.
- Buddhism differs from many other religions in that they do not worship a creator or god. However, that does not preclude many traditions that incorporate gods/goddesses/multiple other sentient beings



END OF LIFE MEDICAL CARE



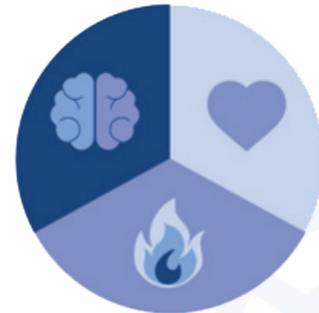
- With Buddhist patients, practices surrounding the dying process often involve a delicate balance between their desire for awareness and their need for comfort
- To provide culturally sensitive care, you should inquire about practices related to using incense, washing the body, or wearing particular clothing or blessing cords
- Seek consent before removing or altering anything, such as a red “string” or blessing cord
- Buddhist patients may need encouragement to express their needs and desires about care

PRACTICES WHEN APPROACHING END OF LIFE

- Death and dying are openly discussed and embraced within their cultural and spiritual framework.
- Chants, rituals, and prayers often play a significant role in supporting the dying person's transition and comforting those left behind.
- Astrology may influence the desired timing of the patient's passing, potentially impacting medication decisions.
- For Buddhists, the most prevalent method of handling the deceased's body is cremation.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Within any faith tradition, members may hold individual and differing beliefs.
- Inquire about patient preferences in medical decision making, preferred support, rituals, and timing of medications with respectful curiosity.
- For additional support, contact the palliative care or hospice chaplain or a member of the chaplaincy department who can also help connect the patient and/or family to local faith leaders.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

<https://www.rimesociety.org/>

<https://www.buddhistchurchesofamerica.org/>

<https://www.upaya.org/>

<https://www.advancingexpertcare.org/education-events/on-demand-education/22diversity-equity-inclusion-belonging/>



The Diversity in Health Care video series was made possible through a grant from the Jack Buncher Foundation to develop resources for providing culturally appropriate end-of-life care to Jewish, Hindu, and Buddhist patients. View the full video series [here](#).

If you have any questions, please contact info@hpnf.org.