ST. FRANCIS 24/7 CALL CENTER: (321) 269-4240

St. Francis REFLECTIONS® Hospice
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Fatigue

Fatigue is a common symptom in hospice patients due to the body's natural decline, medication side effects, or the illness itself. Managing fatigue is about balancing activity with rest. Fatigue can be physical or mental, or a combination of both. At times rest may help, other times fatigue may be chronic and continues no matter how much rest the patient may have. Fatigue is also a common symptom in primary caregivers including compassion fatigue and burnout.

Common signs and symptoms to monitor for:

- Excessive sleepiness or sleeping more than usual
- Lack of energy or motivation
- Shortness of breath with minimal activity
- Weakness in the muscles
- Difficulty completing tasks or activities
- Anxiety or sadness
- Increased agitation or restlessness
- Emotional withdraw

Tips for Patient Fatigue Management:

- **Encourage Rest**: Allow the patient to rest as needed and let the patient know it's okay to feel tired and take things slowly. Avoid pushing them to do more than they can handle. Ensure their sleeping environment is comfortable.
- **Energy Conservation**: Help the patient conserve energy by planning activities around their energy levels. Prioritize tasks that are important to the patient and pace activities throughout the day. Use adaptive equipment (i.e. bedside commode or shower chairs0 to conserve energy. Establish a routine such as shorter naps during the day and avoiding caffeine before bedtime.
- **Support with Mobility**: Encourage light activities (i.e. stretching, or short walks) as able to maintain muscle strength. Assist with walking or transfers to reduce the

effort required by the patient. Use mobility aids like walkers or wheelchairs as needed.

- **Diet**: Provide small, nutrient-rich meals to help maintain energy levels. Offer easy-to-digest foods that are high in calories and protein. Encourage fluids to prevent dehydration, which can worsen fatigue.

Tips for Caregiver Fatigue Management:

- **Prioritize**: Prioritize activities that allow time for self-care. Utilize assistance and support from others. Utilize respite care. When people offer help, accept it, suggest specific things they can do. Do not allow your loved ones illness always take center stage in your life.
- **Self-Awareness**: Remember to value what you're doing and remind yourself that it's a hard job and you deserve quality time, just for you. Be aware of feelings of sadness or fatigue that impact your daily life, seek help and support when you need it.
- **Educate Yourself**: Knowledge is empowering, educate yourself about your loved ones condition. Stand up for your rights and understand your feelings are validated. Connect with support groups involving other caregivers, you are not alone. Try to remain open to new ideas that promote your loved ones independence and quality of life.
- **Grief**: Allow yourself to grieve all your losses, not only physical losses. Your loved one will not be the same person they were years prior, and its normal to grieve the loss of who they once were. Do not bottle in your emotions, eventually you will explode.

Record and Report to St. Francis:

- Lifestyle or behavior changes
- Treatments that are not working
- Medication side effects

St. Francis Reflections is always available to assist with any questions or concerns 24/7

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