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

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# Cardiomyopathy

Cardiomyopathy is a disease of the heart muscle that affects its size, shape, and ability to pump blood. There are several types of cardiomyopathy, including dilated, hypertrophic, and restrictive cardiomyopathy, each with different implications for heart function.

## Common Symptoms:

**Symptoms may differ from person to person**

- Shortness of breath, especially during exertion or lying down
- Swelling in the legs, ankles, and feet (edema)
- Fatigue and weakness
- Dizziness, lightheadedness, or fainting spells
- Rapid or irregular heartbeats (palpitations)

## Causes:

**Potential causes:**

- Cardiomyopathy can be inherited or caused by factors such as high blood pressure, heart valve disease, and certain infections. In many cases the exact cause is unknown.

## Hospice Considerations:

Cardiomyopathy progresses to a point where heart function severely declines, and treatments become less effective. Hospice care focuses on symptom relief and enhancing comfort.

- **Advanced Symptoms:** When the patient experiences extreme fatigue, shortness of breath at rest, and significant fluid retention, becoming increasingly dependent on caregivers.
- **Symptom Management:** Difficulty managing symptoms such as persistent chest pain, breathlessness, and swelling becomes difficult, often requiring ongoing medications and monitoring.
- **End-of-Life Care:** When patients and families choose to focus on comfort rather than aggressive interventions, hospice care provides support, ensuring dignity and ease during the dying process.

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## Symptom Management Tips:

- **Breathlessness:** Help the patient find a comfortable position (i.e. sitting up) to ease breathing. Consider using a fan or cool cloths for comfort.
- **Pain Management:** Assess for any chest pain or discomfort and administer prescribed pain medications promptly.
- **Fluid Management:** Monitor fluid intake to avoid overload; encourage small sips if the patient has difficulty

## How to Help:

- **Patient Tips:**
  - **Stay Calm:** Practice relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing, to reduce anxiety during breathlessness.
  - **Rest:** Take frequent breaks during activities to avoid fatigue and conserve energy.
  - **Engage in Light Activities:** Participate in light stretching or breathing exercises, as tolerated, to maintain mobility.

- **Caregiver Tips:**
  - **Be Attentive to Symptoms:** Monitor for worsening symptoms, such as increased fatigue or shortness of breath, and communicate changes to the healthcare team.
  - **Promote Comfort:** Ensure the patient is in a comfortable environment with proper support for resting and sleeping.
  - **Emotional Support:** Encourage open conversations about fears and feelings related to their condition.

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

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