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

St. Francis REFLECTIONS® Hospice
Established 1977 • Licensed 1990

Huntington's Disease

Huntington's disease is a hereditary neurodegenerative disorder characterized by the progressive breakdown of nerve cells in the brain.

Common Symptoms:

Symptoms may differ from person to person with gradual decline over years

- Uncontrollable movements
- Declining cognitive abilities, including memory loss and difficulty concentrating
- Mood swings, irritability, and depression
- Difficulty with speech and swallowing
- Changes in coordination and balance

Causes:

- **Huntington's Disease is a hereditary disorder due to gene mutation**.

Hospice Considerations:

Huntington's disease leads to progressive decline and severe disability. With no current cure hospice focuses on managing symptoms and supporting the patient and family through the end stages.

- **Advanced Symptoms:** When disease progresses to a stage where the patient experiences experience profound motor dysfunction, significant cognitive decline, and emotional disturbances, requiring increased care.
- **Symptom Management:** When managing symptoms such as such as uncontrollable movements, dysphagia, and emotional fluctuations necessitates a tailored approach in hospice.
- **End-of-Life Care:** When care focus shifts to comfort, discontinuing non-essential medications, and focusing on quality of life and emotional support during the dying process.

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Symptom Management Tips:

- **Motor Symptoms:** Encourage light activity as tolerated to maintain mobility; use assistive devices as needed.
- **Behavioral Changes:** Monitor for psychiatric symptoms and communicate changes to hospice team. Anticipate possible mood swings and provide emotional support.

How to Help:

- **Patient Tips:**
  - **Engage in Activities:** Participate in hobbies that stimulate cognitive function, such as music or arts and crafts.
  - **Communicate Needs:** Express needs clearly and use visual cues or gestures when necessary.
  - **Prioritize Comfort:** Focus on rest and comfort, engaging in relaxing activities that reduce stress.

- **Caregiver Tips:**
  - **Monitor Changes:** Be observant of any changes in behavior, mobility, or mental status; communicate with hospice team.
  - **Encourage Independence:** Facilitate as much independence as possible, allowing the patient to participate in self-care activities.
  - **Provide Emotional Support:** Listen to concerns and offer reassurance; consider joining support groups for caregivers and families.

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

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