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

St. Francis REFLECTIONS® Hospice
Established 1977 • Licensed 1990

Multiple Sclerosis (MS)

MS is an autoimmune disease that affects the central nervous system, causing damage to the myelin sheath around nerve fibers. This leads to a range of neurological symptoms.

Common Symptoms:

Symptoms may differ from person to person

- Fatigue
- Difficulty walking
- Muscle weakness
- Numbness
- Problems with vision and coordination

Causes:

Potential causes:

- The exact cause is unknown, but genetic predisposition and environmental factors (such as viral infections) are thought to play a role.

Hospice Considerations:

MS is not curable, but treatments can manage symptoms and modify the disease course. Disease-modifying therapies (i.e. interferons) and symptomatic treatments (i.e. corticosteroids) are used. In hospice, symptom management and comfort is prioritized.

- **Advanced Disease:** When MS progresses to a point where the patient is severely impaired in daily functioning and experiences significant complications.
- **Symptom Burden:** When symptoms such as severe spasticity, incontinence, and mobility issues are challenging to manage with current treatments.
- **Comfort and Support:** When transitioning to a focus on comfort and supportive care becomes necessary.

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Symptom Management Tips:

- **Fatigue:** Energy conservation techniques and proper rest.
- **Spasticity:** Medications like muscle relaxers (baclofen or tizanidine) to reduce muscle spasticity.
- **Mobility:** Use of assistive devices and physical therapy to improve function and prevent complications.
- **Bladder and Bowel Issues:** Management of incontinence and constipation through medications and lifestyle adjustments.

How to Help:

- **Patient Tips:**
  - **Manage Fatigue:** Use energy conservation techniques, and rest when needed.
  - **Temperature Regulation:** Avoid overheating, as it can worsen MS symptoms; use cooling devices if necessary.
  - **Mobility Aids:** Use braces, canes, or wheelchairs as needed to maintain mobility and prevent falls.
- **Caregiver Tips:**
  - **Assist with Transfers:** Help with getting in and out of bed or chairs if the patient has weakness or spasticity.
  - **Emotional Support:** Be patient during cognitive or mood changes, offering gentle reminders and reassurance.
  - **Safety Adaptations:** Make home modifications to accommodate physical challenges and improve safety.

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

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