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

St. Francis REFLECTIONS® Hospice
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Parkinson's Disease

Parkinson's disease is a progressive neurodegenerative disorder affecting movement control due to the loss of dopamine-producing neurons in the brain.

Common Symptoms:

Symptoms may differ from person to person

- **Early symptoms include:**
  - Tremors
  - Bradykinesia (slowness of movement)
  - Rigidity and postural instability
- **As the disease progresses:**
  - Patients may have difficulty with balance, coordination, and daily activities.

Causes:

Potential causes:

- The exact cause is unknown, but genetic and environmental factors may contribute. Abnormal protein aggregation and oxidative stress are involved.

Hospice Considerations:

While Parkinson's disease cannot be cured, treatments aim to manage symptoms. Medications like levodopa/carbidopa and dopamine agonists are commonly used. In hospice, focus shifts to symptom management.

- **Advanced Symptoms:** When Parkinson's disease progresses to a stage where the patient is unable to perform daily activities independently and experiences severe complications.
- **Symptom Management:** When managing symptoms such as severe motor dysfunction, difficulty swallowing, and significant cognitive decline becomes difficult.
- **End-of-Life Care:** When the patient and family decide to prioritize comfort and quality of life over further medical treatments.

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Symptom Management Tips:

- **Motor Symptoms:** Use medications to manage tremors and rigidity. Physical therapy and exercise can improve mobility and reduce falls (if appropriate, requires physician order).
- **Pain:** Pain management through medications and physical therapy (as appropriate) to alleviate musculoskeletal discomfort.
- **Speech and Swallowing:** Speech therapy (as appropriate) can help with communication and swallowing difficulties. Practice safe swallowing techniques.
- **Safety:** Home modifications to prevent falls and ensure safety, such as grab bars and non-slip mats.

How to Help:

- **Patient Tips:**
  - **Exercise:** Gentle exercises like stretching and walking can help maintain mobility and reduce stiffness.
  - **Medication Timing:** Take medications on a regular schedule to optimize symptom control.
  - **Speech:** Practice speaking slowly and clearly, and alternative communication devices if communication becomes difficult.
- **Caregiver Tips:**
  - **Monitor for Changes:** Pay attention to medication side effects, such as hallucinations, and report them to the doctor.
  - **Assist with Daily Living:** Help with daily tasks as needed, but encourage the patient to maintain independence when possible.
  - **Cognitive Support:** Provide mental stimulation through activities like puzzles or reading to keep the brain engaged.

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

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