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

St. Francis REFLECTIONS® Hospice
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Sarcopenia

Sarcopenia is the loss of muscle mass, strength, and function due to aging or underlying health conditions. It can lead to significant physical frailty and increased risk of falls and disability. It is often associated with chronic diseases, sedentary lifestyle, and malnutrition, significantly impacting the quality of life in older adults.

Common Symptoms:

Symptoms may differ from person to person

- Noticeable decrease in muscle mass or strength
- Difficulty standing up from a seated position or climbing stairs
- Increased fatigue or lack of energy
- Higher frequency of falls or difficulty with balance
- Unintentional weight loss

Causes:

Potential causes:

- Causes can be attributed to multiple factors including; aging, lack of physical activity, poor nutrition (especially low protein intake), chronic illnesses (like heart or lung disease), and hormonal changes as people age.

Hospice Considerations:

Sarcopenia can lead to significant frailty and disability. While interventions can help maintain strength, hospice focuses on managing symptoms and preventing complications as the condition progresses.

- **Advanced Symptoms:** When the patient experiences marked weakness, difficulty walking, and complete dependence for activities of daily living.
- **Symptom Management:** Difficulty managing symptoms such as severe weakness, risk of falls, and swallowing difficulties.
- **End-of-Life Care:** When patients and families choose to focus on comfort rather than aggressive interventions, hospice care provides support, ensuring dignity and comfort to enhance the quality of life.

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Symptom Management Tips:

- **Strength Maintenance:** Engage in light resistance exercises, as tolerated, to preserve remaining muscle mass.
- **Fall Prevention:** Ensure the environment is safe, with clear pathways and assistive devices readily available.
- **Pain Management:** Use gentle massage and topical pain relief methods to alleviate muscle discomfort.

How to Help:

- **Patient Tips:**
  - **Eat Nutrient-Rich Foods:** If appropriate focus on high-protein snacks and meals to support muscle health.
  - **Stay Hydrated:** Drink fluids regularly to prevent dehydration and support overall health (as tolerated).
  - **Prioritize Rest:** Take naps or rest periods to recover strength after activities.

- **Caregiver Tips:**
  - **Encourage Movement:** Assist with gentle exercises and encourage regular movement to help maintain mobility and muscle strength as able.
  - **Provide Emotional Support:** Offer encouragement and positive reinforcement, celebrating small victories in maintaining independence.

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

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