

Caregiver Care Guide:

Anxiety

What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is a feeling of worry or nervousness in which a person may be unable to rest, concentrate, or focus. It is not unusual for people under hospice care (or their caregivers) to feel anxious. This feeling may be difficult to put into words; “I can’t tell you what is wrong, but something is wrong.” If anxiety is not treated, a person may become restless or agitated.

What are some Symptoms of Anxiety?

- Fear or worrying
- Trouble sleeping
- Feeling unable to “catch your breath”
- Trouble concentrating or focusing
- Inability to relax or “get comfortable”
- Fidgeting, frequently changing position, restlessness

What can be done to Manage Anxiety?

- Treat other conditions that may be causing anxiety, such as pain
- Slow, deep breathing
- Keeping environment calm (consider limiting visitors)
- Listening to preferred music
- Provide reassurance and support
- Sometimes medications, such as benzodiazepines or antidepressants, may be needed to manage anxiety

What are some of the Side Effects of Treating Anxiety?

Medications used to treat anxiety may have some of the following side effects. With continued use, many of these effects will decrease or may even go away.

- Increased sleepiness or feeling “groggy”
- Dizziness
- Confusion
- Impaired coordination
- Headache

If Anxiety is not managed or medication side effects do not improve, notify the hospice team.