
Managing Depression

What is depression?

- A range of feelings that may include sadness, gloom, numbness, emptiness, helplessness and hopelessness
- Occurs frequently in chronic and terminal illness
- Symptoms are often the same as those of illness

What are the signs and symptoms of depression?

- Fatigue
- Sadness, depressed mood
- Loss of appetite with weight loss
- No interest or pleasure in daily activities
- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Sleep problems
- Feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness, guilt
- Difficulty focusing and thinking
- Thoughts of death or suicide
- Agitation or slowing down

What to report to the hospice/palliative care team?

- Any of the symptoms
- A known history of depression
- Any symptoms such as pain, nausea, difficulty breathing
- Change in medications the team may be unaware of

What can be done for depression?

Depression may occur at the end-of-life. There is a wide range of intensity of depression. The team will help you sort out causes of depression. They will discuss treatment options with you.

You may:

- Optimize physical status with rest and nutrition
- Set small, realistic, achievable goals
- Utilize relaxation techniques
- Consider complementary therapies such as aromatherapy, art and music therapy

Your caregiver may:

- Keep you and your area safe
- Let you know that they will be there
- Allow you to express feelings
- Allow you to control as much as possible related to treatment decisions and activities

Other HPNA Teaching Sheets on are available at www.HPNA.org.

Reference

Core Curriculum for the Generalist Hospice and Palliative Nurse. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company; 2011.

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