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## Managing Depression

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### 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](http://www.HPNA.org).

## Reference

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

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