

You can reach us at:

This information is also available at:
www.BristolHospice.com



Anxiety, Restlessness, Agitation and Sadness Management

If these techniques below are unsuccessful, please call Bristol. **We want to help!**

The goal is that your loved one will achieve an acceptable level of Anxiety, Restlessness, Agitation or Sadness or less.

This means:

1. Verbal anxiety or sadness scale at or below their acceptable level.
2. Loved ones who are not able to talk appear comfortable and calm. They can sleep, interact in their normal manner and their breathing is relaxed.

How to identify your loved one might be experiencing anxiety, restlessness, agitation, or sadness by statements you might hear:

1. Anxiety, Restlessness and Agitation

- a. "I feel like my body can't hold still..."
- b. "I'm feeling so anxious today..."
- c. "I feel like my arms and legs have a mind of their own and just won't stop."
- d. "I feel angry today..."
- e. "I'm so tired but feel like I need to get up and move around."
- f. "I feel so frustrated and angry."
- g. Every problem has a catastrophic result to your loved one's perspective:
 - i. Example: Your loved one is having pain today = "My pain will never be under control."

2. Sadness

- a. "I'm feeling down..."
- b. "I'm feeling blue..."
- c. "I feel like I'm all alone..."
- d. "I'm too tired to go to the activity today." Especially after a previous discussion of excitement about this activity.
- e. "I'm surviving..."
- f. "I feel off..."
- g. "You don't understand, no one understands."
- h. "I hate everything..."

How to identify if your loved one is experiencing anxiety, restlessness, agitation, or sadness if they are not able to tell you of their anxiety, restlessness, agitation, or sadness:

- Increased heart rate
- Rapid breathing
- Difficulty sleeping
- Sweating
- Shaking
- Overeating
- Under eating
- Dizziness
- Grinding teeth
- Changes in behavior
- Nausea

*As many of these symptoms could also be caused by pain or shortness of breath it is important to identify the most likely cause. For example, if your loved one often experiences shortness of breath it could be the shortness of breath which is causing their anxiety. Look for those signs and symptoms as it could be appropriate to treat their shortness of breath (or pain) first. If they are still uncomfortable try treatments for anxiety as ordered by your physician.

How to help your loved one if they are experiencing anxiety, restlessness, agitation, or sadness:

1. Non-medication related:

- a. Reach out to your care team for help
- b. Listen and give positive reinforcement, even if your loved one is confused, and their statements make no sense.
- c. For loved ones with confusion or dementia you do not need to try and help them understand why things are not as they appear. Instead use positive reinforcement for any statements they have. Try and help them feel better no matter the problem.
 - i. For example: "Someone stole my glasses! I can't find them anywhere!"
If you know that this is not an accurate statement you can:
 - 1) Give them the glasses if you know where they are
 - 2) Tell them you are so sorry to hear that and you will help them look for the glasses. Then try to redirect the conversation away from the glasses. Such as reminiscing about an old story from their childhood or past they may remember.
- d. De-clutter environment
- e. Participate in activities your loved one enjoys or used to enjoy
- f. Gentle massage – relaxation technique
- h. Pet therapy (if there is a pet in the home) – relaxation technique
- i. Meditation – relaxation technique
- j. Distraction techniques
 - i. Television
 - ii. Music
 - iii. Change of scenery
 - iv. Conversation
 - v. Snacks
- k. Repositioning
 - i. Changing positions in bed
 - ii. Changing from bed to chair or chair to bed

2. Medication related:

- a. Anxiety, restlessness, and agitation medication as ordered by physician
- b. Sadness medication as ordered by physician (these medications are usually a scheduled medication to be taken daily)
- c. Medications such as Ativan or Haldol or Seroquel possible side effects:
 - i. Drowsiness
 - ii. Light-headedness
 - iii. Confusion
 - iv. Unsteadiness
 - v. Dizziness
 - vi. Slurred speech
 - vii. Muscle weakness
 - viii. Constipation
 - ix. Drowsiness
 - x. Upset stomach
 - xi. Tiredness
 - xii. Dry mouth

3. If these techniques are unsuccessful, please call Bristol and **we want to help.**

Comments: _____
