



“Lighting the way with better patient care.”

Anova
HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

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HOSPICE PATIENT AND FAMILY EDUCATION AND TRAINING

MANAGING RESTLESSNESS

What is restlessness?

- Inabilities to rest, relax, or concentrate.
- Extreme restlessness is sometimes called agitation.
- A condition that occurs in nearly half of all patients during the last 48 hours of life.

What are signs that the patient is restless?

- Muscle twitching.
- Moving around without a known reason.
- Pulling at sheets, covers, or clothing.
- Trying to get out of bed for no known reason.
- Fidgeting.
- Sleeplessness.
- Inability to get comfortable.

What to report to the Hospice and Palliative Care Team?

- Any of the signs or behaviours of the patient listed above.
- Inability of the person to swallow medications.
- Things that make the restlessness worse (for example – loud music).
- Things that make the restlessness better (for example – soft music).
- Concerns that you may have as a caregiver (what will help you cope with the restlessness).
- Need for spiritual support for the patient or caregiver.
- Situations that might be unsafe (for example, the need for side rails to keep patient in bed).

What can be done?

The team will try to find the reason for the restlessness and talk with you about treatments.

- Give medications to the patient as ordered.
- Offer frequent reassurance to the patient.
- Remain with the restless person as much as possible.
- Offer relaxation activities if the patient is alert and oriented.
- Playing soothing music that the patient likes.
- Keep things calm around the patient (for example, decrease numbers of visitors).
- Read favourite stories, poem, etc. to your loved one in a calm voice.
- Do gentle massage, comforting touches, or other things to calm the patient.
- Keep the patient safe (for example, do not leave the patient alone while restless).

Understand the restlessness may be a sign that the patient is close to death – let other family members know what is happening.

Anova Health Care System

Address: 875 Greentree Road, 2 Parkway Center Ste 110, Pittsburgh, PA 15220

Tel: (412) 681-1044 **Fax:** (412) 681-8380 **Email:** info@anovahomehealth.com

Website: www.AnovaHomeHealth.com