Northern Health Palliative Care

Fatigue – Tips for Personal Support Workers

- People with progressive life-limiting illnesses may feel **fatigue, or loss of energy**, without having consciously used any energy.
- Fatigue without exertion can be **an early sign of illness** and usually becomes more obvious as disease progresses.
- **Causes of fatigue**: Disease, treatment, medication, decreased intake, weight loss, stress, sleep disturbance, depression, fears, anxiety and pain.
- **Adapt the care plan** and **individualize comfort measures** to meet the person’s changing energy levels as their disease progresses.

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<th>Preventive</th>
<th>In the Moment</th>
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| - Be alert for signs of fatigue:  
  o Inability to complete ADLs and other usual tasks.  
  o Having slept/rested but without feeling energized.  
  o May express: *I’m still so tired.*  
- When a person’s strength and abilities decrease:  
  o Assist with ADL & transfer.  
  o Assist with pacing their daily plans.  
  o Encourage exercise early in the disease process as a way to increase energy. | - Listen and acknowledge the person’s/family’s sense of frustration and limitation.  
- Be mindful of person’s energy when providing care.  
- Be flexible in providing care.  
- Reschedule planned treatments and activities.  
- Offer a meal in bed.  
- Offer a small snack.  
- Suggest relaxing activities: e.g., listening to music.  
- Suggest options that could improve sleep – e.g., therapeutic touch. | - Help family understand person’s changing energy levels.  
- Work with family to plan appropriate activities and caregiving.  
- Listen and acknowledge their fears and concerns.  
- Report their concerns to nurse – e.g., fatigue is caused by medications.  
- Invite family to help with ADLs.  
- Share information about:  
  o Helping loved one without “doing it all” for them.  
  o Being open to adapt plans.  
  o Being mindful of person’s energy and needs when visiting.  
  o Asking nurse for more information about fatigue. |