

REFERENCES

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Restlessness and Agitation

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Restlessness and agitation is distressing for patients and carers.

Before we can relieve this symptom, we need to find out the cause.

Possible causes of restlessness and agitation

Physical discomfort

Unrelieved pain
Full bladder or full bowel
Uncomfortable bed
Nicotine, alcohol or medication withdrawal
Rash or itch
Unfamiliar environment

Psychological discomfort

Feelings such as
Hopelessness
Helplessness
Anger
Guilt
Fear
Spiritual discomfort
Unfinished business
Hallucinations (visions)

Do any of the following apply?

1. Patient seems not to know what to do with him/herself.
Something seems not quite right.
2. Involuntary movement, such as twitching or jerking
3. Purposeful movement, such as fidgeting, pacing, fumbling or plucking

How to treat or remove possible causes of restlessness

1. Change the patient's body position if they can tolerate this.
2. Check when the patient last passed urine or opened their bowels.
3. Ensure the person is safe. Have someone sit next to them. Try reading, singing, massage or something the person enjoyed when they were well.
4. Reduce stimulation in the environment. Prevent irritating sounds such as phones, vacuum cleaner.
5. Use familiar voices, pictures and belongings.
6. Gentle stroking/massage/aromatherapy.
7. Spiritual support.
8. Lower bed to the ground or put a mattress next to the bed.
9. Assist with smoking or nicotine patch application.
10. If the patient feels too hot or cold, adjust the room temperature. Maybe open a window.
11. Religious guidance, if appropriate for the patient and family.