

Managing Restlessness

What is restlessness?

Restlessness means being unable to stay calm, relax, or focus. Sometimes, it's also called agitation, which is a stronger form of restlessness. It happens in nearly half of people during the last 48 hours of life.

Signs and symptoms of restlessness

- Fidgeting or moving around
- Trying to get out of bed for no reason
- Pulling at blankets or clothes
- Trouble sleeping
- Not being able to get comfortable or making unhappy faces

What can you do to help with restlessness?

- Give the medicine as the doctor told you to.
- Offer comfort, like gentle words or holding their hand.
- Keep the environment calm and limit visitors.
- Offer relaxing activities, like playing soft music or reading favorite stories.
- Make sure the area is safe.
- Understand that restlessness could mean death is close and let family members know what's happening.

What should you tell your care team?

- Any of the signs listed above
- If you can't give medicine
- Things that make the restlessness worse, like loud noises
- Things that help, like soft music
- If the person needs spiritual support
- Any safety concerns

Other helpful resources

Final Days

Hospice Training for Caregivers and Families Video: Signs of Changes

Hospice Training for Caregivers and Families Video: Final Moments

Managing Anxiety

Managing Delirium

Using Haloperidol (Haldol) to Treat Symptoms

Using Lorazepam (Ativan) to Treat Anxiety

When the Time Comes