

# Patient Resource Guide: Managing Anxiety

## OVERVIEW OF ANXIETY

Anxiety is a common emotional response for individuals facing the challenges of hospice care, affecting both patients and their families. It encompasses feelings of worry, fear, and unease that can range from mild to severe. Understanding anxiety's impact is crucial in addressing its management, as it can influence one's overall well-being and quality of life during this sensitive period.

## CAUSES OF ANXIETY

In hospice settings, anxiety can stem from various factors, including the advanced illness itself, fear of the unknown, changes in health status, existential concerns, or the emotional strain of caregiving. These stressors can exacerbate feelings of helplessness and uncertainty, contributing to heightened anxiety levels among patients and their loved ones.

COMMON CAUSES OF ANXIETY	PROPOSED MECHANISM FOR ANXIETY
<b>Advanced Illness</b>	Physical discomfort, fear of the unknown regarding illness progression, and existential concerns about mortality leading to distress.
<b>Changes in Health</b>	Uncertainty and worry about declining health, loss of independence, or inability to cope with new health challenges.
<b>Fear of the Unknown</b>	Anticipation of unpredictable events, future outcomes, or unfamiliar situations causing apprehension and unease.
<b>Psychological/Spiritual Distress</b>	Contemplation of life's purpose, meaning, and the unknown aspects of death and dying, leading to existential distress.

## NON-MEDICATION TECHNIQUES FOR REDUCING ANXIETY

ACTIVITY	EXPLANATION FOR ANXIETY REDUCTION
<b>Create a Calm Environment</b>	Designating a peaceful and comfortable space free from clutter or excessive stimuli. This can involve dimming lights, playing soothing music, or using aromatherapy to promote relaxation.
<b>Engage in Soothing Activities</b>	Encouraging activities that promote relaxation, such as guided imagery, deep breathing exercises, gentle stretching, or participating in hobbies and activities that bring comfort.
<b>Maintain a Consistent Routine</b>	Establishing a predictable daily schedule can provide stability and a sense of control, reducing uncertainty and anxiety. This includes consistent meal times, bedtime rituals, and activities.
<b>Provide Comfort and Reassurance</b>	Offering emotional support, validation of feelings, and empathetic communication. Creating an environment where individuals feel heard, understood, and comforted can ease anxiety.

## MEDICATION TREATMENT OPTIONS FOR MANAGING ANXIETY

PHARMACOLOGIC TREATMENT STRATEGIES FOR ANXIETY IN THE HOSPICE SETTING		
<b>Benzodiazepines:</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective in providing immediate relief for acute anxiety symptoms</li> <li>• Side effects include drowsiness and confusion</li> </ul>		
Medication	Dosing	Notes
<b>Alprazolam</b>	Three or four doses/day	Shortest-acting benzodiazepine used for anxiety Works in approximately 20 minutes; lasts <b>4-6 hours</b> Potential for anxiety between doses due to short activity
<b>Lorazepam</b>	Two to four doses/day	Works in 20-30 minutes; lasts <b>6-8 hours</b> Available in liquid form Preferred over alprazolam in patients with liver disease
<b>Clonazepam</b>	Two or three doses/day	Works in 20-60 minutes; lasts <b>12 hours</b> Scheduling doses may be helpful in managing persisting symptoms
<b>Diazepam</b>	Two to Four doses/day	Works in 15-45 minutes, may stay in system as long as 50 hrs+ Risk for accumulation and oversedation with multiple doses

Antipsychotics		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider for severe, acute anxiety associated with paranoia, severe agitation, hallucinations, delirium or confusion</li> </ul>		
Medication	Dosing	Notes
<b>Haloperidol</b>	Can be dosed up to every 2 hours as needed, typically every 8-12 hours or PRN	Works in approximately 30-45 minutes; lasts <b>4-12 hours</b> In addition to anxiety, may have additional benefit for nausea and insomnia
Nonbenzodiazepine Anxiety Medication		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generally less effective for anxiety disorders than benzodiazepines, but may have utility in benzodiazepine intolerance</li> </ul>		
Medication	Dosing	Notes
<b>Buspirone</b>	Two to three doses/day	Peak serum level achieved in 0.7 to 1.5 hours Delayed onset (1-3 weeks) , therefore limited benefit in the hospice setting Common side effects include dizziness, headache, drowsiness, fatigue, nausea
<b>Hydroxyzine</b>	Two to four times/day	Works in 15 to 30 minutes May cause dry mouth, constipation, urine retention,

These medications work in different ways to reduce anxiety symptoms in hospice patients. Monitoring may involve observing for potential side effects or adverse reactions, ensuring safe and effective usage, while additional information provides insights into considerations and characteristics specific to each medication.

## SUMMARY OF MANAGING ANXIETY

To successfully manage Anxiety in the hospice care setting, a mixed approach to therapy is often required, using both non-medication and (if necessary) pharmacologic strategies. Understanding the root causes of anxiety and considering medications under professional guidance can significantly alleviate distress for both patients and their families. This comprehensive approach aims not only to address immediate symptoms but also to enhance comfort and overall well-being during this sensitive phase of life.