

Agitation

Many patients who are in the last weeks or month of life may become agitated, restless, or confused. An agitated person may show swift changes in mood or behave differently than normal. Sometimes, they may even hallucinate, seeing or hearing things that aren't there. Agitation can be caused by changes in the body during the last stages of life. It can also be caused by physical discomfort, such as pain or the need to empty the bowels or bladder. Depending on the cause and severity of a person's agitation, there are different options to help alleviate it.

First, call your hospice care team to

- Assess the distress to determine its cause
- Provide medications if appropriate
- Provide pain medications if needed

Ways caregivers can help

- Avoid startling the patient, such as not abruptly waking them or turning on bright lights
- Identify yourself with a warm greeting in case they've forgotten who you are or don't recognize you
- Create a calm environment, like playing soothing music or speaking quietly
- Offer emotional support to a patient who may be dealing with unresolved life issues