



Comfort Measures

BQIS Fact Sheets provide a general overview on topics important to supporting an individual's health and safety and to improving their quality of life. This document provides general information on the topic and is not intended to replace team assessment, decision-making, or medical advice. This is the third of four Fact Sheets regarding palliative care.

Intended Outcomes

To provide information on palliative care comfort measures that can be done without physician orders and will support the individual in alleviating pain and discomfort.

Definitions

Palliative care: The active, all-encompassing care of individuals to provide relief of and prevention of pain and discomfort.

Comfort measure: Any intervention that relieves pain or discomfort and does not require a doctor's order.

Facts

- Anxiety, anger, depression, frustration, fatigue, and sleeplessness lower the pain threshold and worsen pain.
- Pain is an intensely unpleasant experience that only the person experiencing it can know.
- Each individual has their own 'vocabulary' of distress signs and behaviors indicating pain.
- Pain almost always causes anxiety or fear at first.

Recommended Actions and Prevention Strategies

1. Teach staff the signs/symptoms of pain in general, and those that are specific to the individual (see Palliative Care "General Considerations" Fact Sheet).
2. Acknowledge the individual's pain.
3. Provide routine care, such as keeping individual clean and dry, to promote comfort. If bedridden:
 - Change sheets daily or whenever soiled
 - Keep sheets smooth and free of wrinkles. Straighten sheets with each change of position; one wrinkle may feel like a thick rope to the individual's skin.
 - Clothing should be soft, light materials. Thin cotton or flannel is cool and less irritating to sensitive skin.



4. Make environment as comfortable and relaxing as possible.
 - Eliminate excess noise and chaos
 - Provide adequate but not excessive lighting
 - Calming music or relaxation tapes can help relieve tension and reduce pain
5. Provide warm soothing baths if the individual desires.
 - Use bland soap, rinse well, and dry thoroughly
 - Include a massage of the back with lotion, using slow gentle strokes
 - Wash, comb, and style hair
6. Reposition the individual who cannot do so for themselves at least every two (2) hours while in bed, and every 30 minutes while in a chair, as a comfort measure and also to prevent skin breakdown.
 - Use extra pillows and blankets for comfort and positioning
 - Use pillows to support painful body parts
7. Prevent discomfort and pain by conserving energy and reducing fatigue.
 - Provide frequent rest periods
 - Make sure the individual gets a good night's sleep
 - Have favorite things within reach
 - Prioritize activities and arrange activities to reduce fatigue
 - Carry out activities at times of the day when the individual's energy levels are at their best
8. Provide regular mouth care, especially after meals.
 - Use gauze or sponge swabs if unable to use toothbrush
 - Provide adequate fluids
 - Use lip balm and dry mouth products such as artificial saliva, which come under the brand names of Aquaphor or Biotene
9. Offer frequent, small meals of foods they enjoy and which follow their diet order.



10. Use mobility aids to ease daily living skills, such as getting in and out of bathtub (may need physical or occupational therapy assistance to determine needed aids).

Learning Assessment

The following questions can be used to verify a person's competency regarding the material contained in this Fact Sheet:

1. True or false: Everybody feels pain in the same way.
2. True or false: Conserving energy and preventing fatigue is not important in preventing discomfort and pain.
3. Measures that could relieve pain include:
 - A. A quiet environment
 - B. Repositioning in bed every six (6) hours
 - C. A cool shower
 - D. Bright lighting



References

Burt, T. (2013). *Palliative care of pressure ulcers in long-term care. Annals of Long-Term Care, 21 (3)*. Retrieved 08/20/2015 from <http://www.annalsoflongtermcare.com/article/palliative-care-pressure-ulcers-long-term-care>

Ellison, N. M. & Rosielle, D. A. (2009). *Palliative care for adults with developmental disabilities. Fast fact #192*. Retrieved 08/20/2015 from <https://www.capc.org/fast-facts/192-palliative-care-adults-developmental-disabilities/>

Related Resources

Palliative Care Series Fact Sheets: "General Considerations", "Pain Management", "Adaptive Equipment"

Pain Assessment Rating Scale

Pain Management Diary

Learning Assessment Answers

1. False
2. False
3. A