

Weakness During the Dying Process



Summary

As most diseases progress, weakness increases. The patient progressively requires more assistance in bathing, feeding, and mobility. Eventually the patient may become bed bound and require total care.

Assistive equipment, such as shower stools, wheelchairs, and hospital beds are ordered as needed. As the patient becomes weaker, the caregiver may require more assistance with the physical care of the patient. Home health aides and/or certified nurses' aides often increase assistance and volunteer support is often intensified to meet those needs. Caregivers can become fatigued quickly, and respite (up to 5 days for the patient in a residential care and/or extended care facility to relieve the caregiver for a short amount of time so they can rest, relax, and recoup) is offered as indicated and chosen by the patient and family.

Increased weakness with greater physical care needs may trigger a need for increased psychosocial and/or spiritual support as well. Not only may increased weakness indicate that the patient's condition is declining, but it also signifies loss of independence and control. Anticipatory grief may increase in magnitude at this time, and psychosocial and/or spiritual supportive services are extremely helpful in easing this transition from independence to dependence and in decreasing the anguish associated with anticipatory grief.

