

## **FIGURE 1.**

# PATIENT EDUCATION TIP SHEET: ANXIETY AND DISTRESS

Many patients experience a variety of difficult emotions. Anxiety and distress are often observed at various times during cancer screenings, diagnosis, treatment, or recurrence.

- Anxiety is fear, dread, and uneasiness caused by stress.
- Distress is emotional, mental, social, or spiritual suffering. Patients may have feelings of vulnerability, sadness, depression, panic, and isolation. For patients, anxiety may increase pain, affect sleep, and cause nausea and vomiting. Anxiety and distress may affect a patient's ability to cope with the diagnosis or treatment, which may lead to delays in treatment. Anxiety can substantially interfere with the quality of life of patients and their families.

### **SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY AND DISTRESS**

Uncontrolled worry, fear, or sorrow; trouble focusing or problem solving; muscle tension; trembling or shaking; restlessness; dry mouth; and irritability or anger

### **MANAGING THE SYMPTOMS**

Do

- Remember that you are not alone.
- Take a time out—doing yoga, relaxing, and stepping back from the issue help to clear thoughts.
- Share feelings and fears.
- Caregivers should listen carefully and offer support. Do not deny or discount feelings. Encourage talking.
- It is okay to feel sad and frustrated.
- Get help through counseling and/or support groups.
- Use meditation, prayer, or other types of spiritual support if it helps.
- Exercise and walking can help, as well as yoga.
- Talk with your healthcare provider about using antidepressant medicines.
- Medications to treat myeloma, such as steroids, can make anxiety worse. Discuss your feelings with your treatment team.

Do not

- Keep feelings inside.
- Force someone to talk if they are not ready to.
- Blame yourself or another person for feeling fearful or anxious.
- Try to reason with a person whose fears and anxieties are severe; talk with the doctor about medicines and other kinds of help.

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**Note.** Based on information from Holland & Alici, 2010; Jacobsen et al., 2006; Lamers et al., 2013; Pirl, 2004; Williams & Dale, 2006.

Source: Catamero et al. *Clin J Oncol Nurs*. 2017 Oct 1;21(5):7-18.