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# Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (Lou Gehrig Disease)

Patient name: \_\_\_\_\_

Admission: \_\_\_\_\_

NRS  
DATE INITIAL

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- I. The client/caregiver can define amyotrophic lateral sclerosis or Lou Gehrig disease.
  - A. It is a motor neuron disease affecting nerves of brain and/or spinal cord with progressive degeneration.
  - B. Death frequently occurs from respiratory failure in 2 to 5 years.
  - C. The onset of the disease usually occurs in middle age.
- II. The client/caregiver can list signs and symptoms of disease.
  - A. Muscle weakness and atrophy
  - B. Cramping
  - C. Incoordination of hand and fingers
  - D. Slurred speech
  - E. Loss of reflexes
  - F. Difficulty swallowing
  - G. Fatigue
  - H. Spasticity of muscles
- III. The client/caregiver can list measures to promote independence and maintain muscle strength.
  - A. Participate in physical and occupational therapy as ordered.
  - B. Plan activities with rest periods to avoid overexertion.
  - C. Use adaptive devices to promote independence in activities of daily living.
  - D. Use assistive devices to promote mobility (i.e., wheelchair, lift chair, and walker).
- IV. The client/caregiver can list measures to meet nutritional needs due to difficulty swallowing.
  - A. Adjust diet consistency as needed.
  - B. Use a high-calorie, high-protein diet.

- C. Allow ample time for eating.
- D. Sit in upright position to eat, and do not lie down after eating.
- E. Discuss use of feeding tube when unable to take food by mouth.
- F. Keep suction equipment nearby.
- G. Weigh weekly.
- V. The client/caregiver can list measures to promote communications.
  - A. Speech therapy
  - B. Communication boards or alternative methods of communication
  - C. Cognitive abilities are not altered.
  - D. Encourage client to participate in plan of care and urge expressing feeling to condition.
  - E. Encourage client to plan for future, such as advance directives, living will, and hospice.
- VI. The client/caregiver can list measures to avoid complications.
  - A. Avoid people with upper-respiratory infections to prevent infection.
  - B. Provide good skin care and positioning to prevent breakdown.
  - C. Provide good oral care.
- VII. The client/caregiver can state possible complications.
  - A. Respiratory infection
  - B. Respiratory failure
  - C. Use of mechanical ventilation
  - D. Injury
  - E. Aspiration pneumonia

(Continued)

**RESOURCES**

ALS Association  
[www.alsa.org](http://www.alsa.org)

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke  
[www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/amyotrophiclateralsclerosis/](http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/amyotrophiclateralsclerosis/)  
amyotrophiclateralsclerosis

Support groups for client and caregiver

Agencies for help in provision of home care

Sources of financial assistance

Counseling

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