



Health & Safety Alert #28-6-05

Observable Signs & Symptoms of Illness and Injury

The purpose of this alert is to provide some general guidelines to staff on what action is appropriate based on the signs and symptoms that are observed or assessed when a consumer is in distress, appears ill or is injured.

Some individuals, based on their particular health concerns, may require a response and action that is not listed in this alert. It is important to document this special response and action in the Individual Service Plan (ISP) and clearly communicate this need to all persons who help support the individual.

The situations listed in this alert may not be all inclusive, so please add others appropriate to your agency.

Important:

When in doubt, seek medical attention immediately.

When to call 911/call for an Ambulance:

- The person appears very ill; sweating, skin looks blue or gray.
- Symptoms develop suddenly; individual stops usual activity or starts to act unusual.
- Severe, constant abdominal pain.
- Bleeding heavily, despite direct pressure.
- Blood pressure of 220 or above for upper number and/or 120 or above for lower number
- Blood pressure below 90 for upper number, when normally above 90
- Pulse (heart rate) is less than 40 or greater than 140
- Difficulty breathing and/or severe wheezing.
- Chest Pain.
- Fainting, loss of consciousness, or won't wake up
- Fall with severe head injury (fall on face, bleeding, change in level of consciousness); **do not move; keep warm.**
- Fall, unable to get up on own and normally would be able to do so, **or** in a lot of pain when lying still or trying to get up. **Do not move; keep warm.**
- Fall, limb deformity noted (bone sticking out, swelling, unusual position of arm, leg). **Do not move; keep warm.**

- First time seizure; **roll to side**, protect head, and move obstacles that may pose a threat.
- Seizure lasting 2+ minutes; one seizure right after the other; person does not wake up after the seizure; person does not start breathing within one minute after seizure stops (is CPR needed?).
- Possible stroke; new weakness, loss or change in speech.
- Repeated vomiting/diarrhea less than 12 hours but not responding normally.
- Any bloody or coffee grounds looking vomit/diarrhea.
- Sudden loss of vision.

When to take an Individual to the Emergency Room/Hospital:

- 24 hours of poor eating/drinking/urination with dry mouth, tongue or eyes.
- Moderate bleeding that stops after 5 minutes of direct pressure, sutures seem needed; **apply pressure while transporting**.
- New onset of confusion lasting over 1 hour.
- Fall, gets up on own but complains of pain or can't walk normally.
- Shaking chill with or without fever.
- Fever over 103 by rectum or 102 by mouth.
- Temperature is 95 or less rectally.
- Repeated vomiting/diarrhea over 12 hours.
- Suffers burn that blisters or skin comes off.

When to call the doctor's office:

- First degree burns, including sunburn (that are reddened or blistered).
- Earache or sore throat.
- Fever less than 103 by rectum or 102 by mouth.
- New onset incontinence.
- New rash.
- Increase in seizure numbers.
- Repeated vomiting/diarrhea more than 6 but less than 12 hours; not holding down small sips of liquids; responds normally.

When to call Poison Control:

- Ingestion of toxic substances.
- Ingestion of wrong medications with a potential to poison.
- Ingestion of wrong amount of prescribed medication and unable to consult with a health care professional.

If you think there may be a health problem:

- Call or talk to your nurse, your supervisor, or the individual's doctor.
- Talk to other staff about what you see.
- Write down what you see.

If you have any questions, please contact the MUI/Registry Unit at (614) 995-3810.