

CENTRAL CARE POLICY SYMPTOMS OF ILLNESS

SUBJECT:	<u>SYMPTOMS OF ILLNESS</u>
ANNUAL REVIEW MONTH:	<u>June</u>
RESPONSIBLE FOR REVIEW:	<u>Director of Central Care</u>
LAST REVISION DATE:	<u>August 2010</u>

Policy:

Consumers will be observed for symptoms of physical problems, distress, pain, or unusual behaviors.

Purpose: To assure that any symptoms of illness, pain, or distress are noted and reported promptly to assure quality care.

Procedure:

In the event of a medical emergency 911 should be called first.

Staff will observe for the following and report any signs and symptoms of illness or distress to the nurse and/or the team leader.

(This policy does not include all signs and symptoms of illness, but will provide guidance in recognizing signs and symptoms of illness.)

Signs and Symptoms of illness/distress

A) Vital Signs:

- Whenever there is a problem an anticipated problem, or signs of illness or distress with a consumer, you must take, record, and report their temperature, pulse, respirations, and blood pressure.
- Compare your results with the consumer's vital signs flow sheet to see if vital signs are above or below what is normal for this consumer.

B) Head (eyes, ears, nose, and throat, sinuses, mouth, and tongue, Central Nervous System:

Eyes – Redness, swelling, discharge and pain could be signs of infection, irritation, or a foreign object in the eye.

- Look closely at eyes to see if you see anything unusual in their appearance.

Ears – Redness, swelling, drainage, and pain could all be signs of infection.

- Has the consumer noticed ringing in the ears?
- Is there a noticeable decrease in hearing?
- Are they pulling at their ears or holding the side of their head?
- Do they complain of headache?

Throat – Soreness, redness, spots in throat, and difficulty swallowing, refusing to eat or drink, can all be symptoms of infection or throat irritation. If there is severe difficulty in swallowing, and they appear to be grasping for breath, get medical attention immediately as there may be swelling in the throat which will decrease their ability to breathe.

Nose/Sinus – Difficulty getting air through nasal passages, thick mucus, and decreased sense of smell can all be signs of a sinus or respiratory tract infection, or virus. Headache or feeling of pressure in the sinus area can be signs of sinus inflammation or infection.

Mouth and Tongue – dry mouth, excessive saliva, coated, clean/shiny, furry, swollen, or sore tongue. If the tongue is swollen, get medical attention immediately.

Central Nervous System – Headaches, sensitivity to light and sound, unusual speech or walk, dizziness, paralysis.

Generalized Pain and or illness may be demonstrated by varied/unusual behaviors:

Behavioral Changes – Striking out, agitation, restless, hyperactivity, withdrawn, any behavior that is unusual for the particular consumer.

- Changes in motor activity – Restlessness, lethargic, pacing, rocking, patting, change in gait, change in weight bearing, sleeping too many hours, unable to easily

arouse, not wanting (for no particular reason) to participate in daily activities, unable to sleep.

- Changes in expression-frowning, grimacing, changes in speech patterns, humming, moaning, crying, screaming, squeezing eyes shut, clenching teeth, change in color, sweating, trembling, shaking, changes in socialization patterns.
- Rubbing/ holding/guarding a particular body part /area
- Decrease in performance of activities of daily living
- Changes in vital signs, change in bowel or bladder function.

C) Trunk (chest, heart, back)

Chest – cough, complaints of a light feeling in the chest, pain, shortness of breath, productive cough, hacking, wheezing (difficulty taking in and exhaling a deep breath, consumer makes noises while breathing) and odorous breath can all be signs of problems with the lungs.

Heart – radiating pain (arm, chest, neck, back), pain in chest, queer feeling in chest, tightness in chest (often described as an elephant is sitting on the chest), pulse above 100 and below 60, shortness of breath, swelling of feet and legs, coughing up blood, excessive tiredness, fainting, and a bluish tinge to skin can all be signs of a serious medical problem.

Back (spinal cord and muscles) – Note any deformities, severe pain in back, impaired movement, and stiffness in neck can all be signs of serious musculoskeletal problems.

D) Limbs (arms, legs, feet)

Arms – Mobility problems, deformities, pain, and swelling could be signs of serious musculoskeletal problems. Note any unusual, uncoordinated, or spastic movements.

Legs – Swelling of the feet and legs, pain or discoloration, and/or skin cool to touch are all indicators of problems with circulation. Note any unusual way of walking, i.e. - faltering,

unsteady, staggering, weakness, swaying, stiff, or immobile. These all could be indicators of medical problems and are definite safety concerns.

Feet – Problems with the feet can include corns, calluses, blisters, or redness. Healthy feet are particularly important for the diabetic. Immediately report sores, bites, etc on any diabetic

E) Skin – Note color, moisture, temperature, texture, odor, eruptions, rash, itching, pain, or redness. Skin can indicate decreased circulation, infection, allergies, and hydration.

F) Signs of dehydration include dry mouth and lips, constipation, concentrated urine (dark color), confusion, lethargy, and elevated temperature.

G) Signs of low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) –

- Nervousness, weakness, sweating, trembling
- Faintness, hunger pangs
- Headache, numbness, or tingling of tongue or lips
- Fast pulse rate
- Confusion, aggressive, or erratic behavior, change in mood
- Double vision
- Pallor, chilling sensation

(Note: Hypoglycemia occurs as a result of too much insulin, not enough food, <delayed or missed meals> and/ or unusual vigorous activity)

H) Signs of high blood sugar (Diabetic Coma)

- Flushed face, rapid pulse and respirations
 - Dry skin and acetone breath
 - Nausea, vomiting, headache, and abdominal pain
 - Thirst, shortness of breath, and coma
- (Note: Diabetic coma occurs as a result of too little insulin, too much food, infections, and G.I. upset)

APPROVED:

_____ TITLE: Director Central Care DATE: _____
George Harris, LCSW