

Understanding Signs and Symptoms of Illness

As professional caregivers you may come in contact with individuals that are becoming ill. It is important to recognize signs and symptoms of illness. There may be a scenario where you are waking someone up and getting them ready for school and you will need to determine if they may be too ill for school. As a provider for PPRS you have the option of working with individuals that may be ill, there are times that parents may still need to make appointments and they need a caregiver and their child needs to be home due to illness. It is crucial to practice universal precautions at all times and if anyone is showing signs of illness you may want to wear a mask.

A. What is a medical sign?

Medical signs are typically noticed by health care professionals and often times are missed by the person experiencing the symptoms. Examples of medical signs are high/low blood pressure, abnormal lab results, high/low blood sugar, fever, redness and discharge around the eyes, etc.

B. What is a medical symptom?

There are three main types of symptoms:

1. Chronic symptoms are characterized by being ongoing such as with diabetes, asthma, depression.
2. Relapsing symptoms have been seen in the past, such as a another round of itchy skin, depression and again cancer.
3. Remitting symptoms sometimes clear completely only to come back from time to time, again seen with anxiety, nerve pain such a phantom pain, etc.

Symptoms are can only be felt by the person experiencing the symptoms and they are subjective to the interpretation of that person.

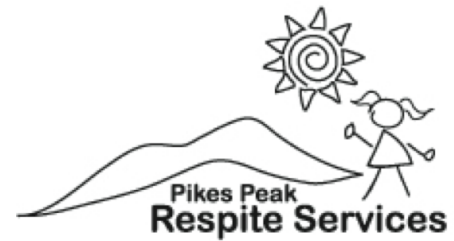
C. Why is recognizing signs & symptoms of illness important?

As a provider, you have intimate details on those we serve and how they typically present when not coming down with illness. With non-verbal individuals it is important to observe affect and report any changes to primary caregivers **and** PPRS administration. An example of change in affect would be if someone that is typically full of energy is suddenly lethargic and possibly showing facial signs of distress. Many of those receiving services by PPRS are medically fragile and require special consideration when making decisions on if someone is too sick for school for day program. It is our company's opinion that it is always better to err on the side of caution than to send a someone that is ill.

D. Be aware....

Providers need to report the following to parents/guardian/primary caregivers and PPRS office immediately:

1. Fever can be a sign of illness coming on the the body is fighting.
2. Diarrhea- can happen because of infection, illness, allergies etc. If the client is in diapers and typically does not experience diarrhea then they must stay home.
3. Vomiting- can be a sign of illness, allergies, food intolerances, medication, etc. If vomiting is not typically experienced then notify the parent/guardian and PPRS administration.
4. Severe cough and cold symptoms- if someone is experiencing cold symptoms they should stay home.



5. Sore throat- can be a sign of strep, cold, or allergies. Unless they frequently experience sore throats and it is documented that they are not contagious they should stay home.
6. Pinkeye- is extremely contagious and they should stay home.

Included in this training is a chart from Children's Hospital Colorado. This training and this chart provided are not all-inclusive and it is up to the provider to use best judgement. If something doesn't "feel right", please report to the parents/guardian and PPRS administrative staff.

As discussed in orientation it is recommended that providers have disposable gloves available on every shift. It is also recommended that providers carry a face mask that can be worn if necessary.