

Adult Protective Services: Risk Assessment in APS

Signs of Medical and Behavioral Health Emergencies

Medical Emergency	Signs
Stroke	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm, or leg especially on one side of the body • Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding • Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes • Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination • Sudden, severe headache with no known cause
Heart Attack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chest discomfort or pain, stomach pain • Shortness of breath, anxiety, lightheadedness, sweating, nausea, and vomiting • Women are more likely than are men to also have heart attack symptoms without chest pain.
Heat Stress	<p>Older adults (people aged 65 years and older) are more prone to heat stress than younger people for several reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older adults do not adjust as well as young people to sudden changes in temperature. • They are more likely to have a chronic medical condition that changes normal body responses to heat. • They are more likely to take prescription medicines that impair the body's ability to regulate its temperature or that inhibit perspiration.
Heat Stroke	<p>Heat stroke, the most serious heat-related illness, occurs when the body cannot control its temperature. The body's temperature rises rapidly, the body loses its ability to sweat, and it is unable to cool down. Body temperatures rise to 106°F or higher within 10 to 15 minutes. Heat stroke can cause death or permanent disability if emergency treatment is not provided. Symptoms of heat stroke include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extremely high body temperature (defined as above 103°F) • Red, hot, and dry skin (no sweating) • Rapid, strong pulse • Throbbing headache • Dizziness • Nausea
Head Injury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confusion • Headache • Fluid from the nose or ears • Unwitnessed head/face injury
Strangulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty breathing • Hoarse voice • “Sniffing position” (nose pointed upwards, stretching neck to allow freer breathing)
Hip Fracture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty walking • Pain in hips

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One leg shorter than the other in the presence of pain • Leg deformity
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acute burns • Nonresponsiveness • Rapid breathing • Agitated behavior • Respiratory distress • Confusion, delirium
Behavioral Health Emergency	Signs
Psychiatric Emergency	Is the older adult a danger to him or herself or others? Is he or she hallucinating, exhibiting delusional thinking, or disoriented?
Drug Related	Factors associated with drug related emergencies include non-compliance with medication regimens, overdose, poor recall of medication regimens, seeing numerous physicians, multiple drugs, and switching to complementary and alternative treatment.
Changes in Mental Status	Changes in mental status may be signs of stroke, drug interactions, or infections. They should be treated as emergencies.
Suicide	<p>Risk factors for suicide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recent loss of a spouse, loved one, or pet • Debilitating or life-threatening illness • Pain, especially if pain is severe, chronic, or inescapable • Loss of independence or mobility, inability to live alone • Loss of employment or productive activities • Financial difficulties • Depression • Alcohol or drug abuse or dependence • Loss of role or stature in family and community • Feelings of hopelessness and helplessness • Physical, social, and emotional isolation <p>Warning signs for suicide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statements about death and suicide, overt suicide threats • Reading material about death and suicide • Statements of hopelessness or helplessness • Disruption of sleep patterns • Increased alcohol or prescription drug use • Failure to take care of self or follow medical orders • Stockpiling medications • Sudden interest in firearms • Social withdrawal or elaborate good-byes • Rush to complete or revise a will