

Ruling out Medical Causes/Exacerbations

Is the person you are supporting experiencing a change in their medical status or behavior?

It is best practice to "Always Rule Out Medical First".

Consider the possibility of pain, an emerging medical problem, and/or medication side effects. (See attached Medication Side Effects Checklist. Check the items that you observe to be true of the person you are supporting. Communicate any of the checked items to the individual's doctor.)

The Individual's yearly physical is months away. Should we wait before seeing the doctor?

Sometimes physicals can be too general to rule out specific medical problems. Schedule a "sick" visit with the doctor so that s/he is alerted to a change in status. Be sure to write down any information you want the doctor to know and any questions that you may have, including any items check marked in the Medication Side Effects Checklist. You may use the tear out guide attached.

Will Insurance pay for this?

Insurance typically pays for one yearly physical, but will pay for "sick" visits as needed. If you have specific questions about insurance reimbursement you can speak to the doctor's office staff or the insurance company.

What types of medical concerns should we talk to the doctor about?

Below are some common issues that can cause medical or behavior changes. It is not an all inclusive list, but can provide you a basis for a conversation with the physician.

Has the Individual Experienced:	Ask the Doctor if the individual may be experiencing...
A change in sleep?	menopause, sleep apnea, GERD (Gastro esophageal Reflux Disease).
Incontinence of urine?	a Urinary Tract Infection (UTI).
Infrequent bowel movements?	constipation or have bowel impactions.
A change in color or consistency of stools?	an ulcer, c-diff, IBS, celiac disease or bowel impaction.
Grabbing his/her throat or chest?	GERD or Strep throat
Increased appetite? Always hungry?	GERD
Aggression "out of the blue"?	seizures
Sleepiness during workday or refusing to complete tasks?	a sleep disorder, sleep apnea or Insomnia.
Aggression in social situations?	a sensory integration issues.
Dementia-like symptoms?	a thyroid disorder.
Pulling on face and ears or banging his/her head?	pain from an ear infection, dental pain, or sinus congestion.

Tip Sheet
Ruling Out Medical Causes & Exacerbations of Challenging Behavior
Communicating With the Physician

To maximize the benefit of the doctor visit, communicate items in the green shaded areas with the nurse or medical assistant when scheduling the appointment. As much as possible, review the information in the green shaded areas again with the doctor during the visit. Complete the yellow shaded area to recall and respond to the doctor's recommendations.

Name _____ has difficulty communicating when s/he is feeling sick. S/he is demonstrating the following behavior/s. Would you help us rule out medical concerns that could be causing or contributing to these behaviors?

Those of us who support _____ were wondering if these behaviors could be related to these medical conditions:

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When _____ is sick, s/he tends to react by:

Past medical problems for this person include:

Did the doctor think there was a medical issue related to the behavior/s? Yes ____ No ____
If yes, what were the doctor's recommendations?

How will we respond to the doctor's recommendations?