

HEALTH LITERACY LESSON

Recognizing Common Illness Warning Signs

Knowing which symptoms need medical attention, and which can usually be managed at home, helps families act quickly when it matters most.

Signs that need prompt medical care

- Difficulty breathing, or very fast breathing
- A high fever that won't come down, especially in an infant
- Signs of dehydration: very little urine, sunken eyes, extreme thirst, or dizziness
- Severe or worsening pain
- Confusion, or unusual drowsiness that's hard to wake from
- A rash that spreads quickly or doesn't fade when pressed
- Repeated vomiting, or being unable to keep fluids down

Symptoms often managed at home

- Mild cold symptoms, like a runny nose or light cough, without fever
- A low-grade fever in someone who is otherwise alert and active
- Minor cuts and scrapes that are cleaned and bandaged

When in doubt

If a symptom feels severe, is getting worse, or you're simply unsure, it's always safer to seek care than to wait.

This lesson is for general education and does not replace advice from a qualified health professional. If you are concerned about a symptom, please seek medical care.

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