

## **How to Communicate Your Loved One's Symptoms During a Crisis**

When your care recipient is in a medical crisis, your ability to observe symptoms carefully and report accurately might be, quite literally, life-saving. But that is also a time when it may be difficult to function clearly. Here is a list that will help you remember what to look for during a crisis. You may want to read it ahead of time, and then tuck a copy in your patient file for later reference.

- What time did the problem start?
- What was he doing when the problem started?
- Do you know or suspect what might have caused the problem?
- What was the first symptom that you noticed?
- What other symptoms/complaints do you remember?
- Did the symptoms come on abruptly or gradually?
- Was he given any medication or medical treatment just before the problem started?  
If so, what was it?
- Did the patient say anything about how he felt when the problem started and/or as it progressed? What was it?
- Does he have a history of this kind of problem? If so, what was the previous diagnosis?
- What did you do to try to help him between the time the problem arose and the time you arrived in the ER or the doctor's office?
- Did something work well? Seem to make things worse?

### **When to Call For Help**

When is a crisis a crisis? When should you call someone else for help? Get help when your care recipient is in some kind of medical distress and you aren't sure what to do.

**Call your local rapid-response number (e.g., 911) or an ambulance if the person you are caring for:**

- Is unconscious
- Has unexplained chest pain or pressure
- Is having trouble breathing or is not breathing at all
- Has no pulse
- Is bleeding severely
- Is vomiting blood or bleeding from the rectum

- Has fallen and may have broken bones
- Has had a seizure
- Has a severe headache and/or slurred speech
- Has pressure or severe pain in the abdomen that does not go away
- Is unusually confused or disoriented

**Also call for help if:**

- Moving the person could cause further injury
- The person is too heavy for you to lift or help
- Traffic or distance would cause a life-threatening delay in getting to the hospital