

Health Conditions/Traumatic Injuries

Alcohol and Drug Withdrawal

The use of harmful or habit-forming drugs, including alcohol, is a serious problem. People usually begin drinking alcohol or taking drugs to escape the hardships or calm the pain in their daily lives. This use contributes to many health problems, including addiction. If the person tries to stop using the alcohol or drugs, it can be dangerous and even lead to death if not done carefully. As a care provider, you can help those who want to stop using alcohol or drugs by knowing the signs and symptoms of withdrawal and calling for help when it is necessary. Your kind and supportive actions can help a person feel safe and find the strength to get better.

What to ask:

- When was the last time you had a drink or took _____ (drug)?
- Have you ever been in withdrawal? If so, does this feel the same?

Symptoms of withdrawal usually begin between five hours up to 10 days after the last alcohol or drug use.

What to look for:

- Nausea and vomiting
- Shaking
- Fever or sweating
- Anxiety or restlessness
- Itching skin
- A feeling of pins, needles, burning, numbness, or bugs crawling on the skin
- Sounds that disturb the person (you may not be able to hear these sounds)
- Sensitivity to light
- Headache
- Dizziness
- Agitation
- Confusion about person, place, or time

Call help if...

The person experiences any of the symptoms above. Withdrawal from alcohol or many drugs can change and become dangerous very quickly.

Allergic Reactions

An allergic reaction happens when something that a person is allergic or sensitive to is:

- Breathed
- Eaten
- Injected
- Touches the skin

Allergic reactions can be mild or very serious (life threatening) and include:

- Itching rashes, lumpy patches, or hives
- Runny nose and itching or burning eyes
- Irritation in the throat, difficulty breathing, or asthma
- Allergic shock

Common causes of allergic reactions include:

- Pollen
- Feathers or hair from animals
- Dust
- Mold
- Food
- Insect stings or bites
- Latex

Call help if...

The person has any of the following symptoms:

- Swollen throat or swollen areas of the body
- Wheezing (breathing that sounds like whistling from the chest)
- Passing out
- Chest tightness
- Trouble breathing
- A hoarse voice
- Trouble swallowing
- A pale or red color to the face and body

An allergic reaction can be life threatening. Do not wait. Call 911!

Asthma

Asthma causes swelling in the airways that lead to the lungs. The airways become tight and narrow and it is difficult to breathe. The name for this situation is an asthma attack. A plan to treat asthma will include treatment of attacks when they happen and control of attacks over a long period.

Asthma symptoms:

- Wheezing
- Cough
- Tightness in the chest
- Shortness of breath
- Trouble sleeping because of coughing or breathing
- Tired during exercise

The symptoms may be worse at night. People may be able to avoid an asthma attack if they stay away from the triggers that cause them. Triggers can include cigarette smoke, air pollution, pet hair, dust mites, cockroaches, or pollen. Exercise also can trigger asthma, so people with asthma should speak to a medical professional to get medicine to help them before they exercise.

Call help if...

- The person has difficulty breathing
- 20 to 30 minutes after taking the prescribed asthma medicine, the person does not feel better
- Coughing up green, dark brown, or bloody mucus

Burns

There are three levels of burns:

First-degree or minor burns affect only the outer layer of the skin and do not cause blisters. They cause pain, redness, and swelling.

Second-degree or partial thickness burns affect both the outer and underlying layers of skin and cause blisters. They also cause pain, redness, and swelling.

Third-degree or full thickness burns extend into deeper tissues. They cause white or blackened, charred skin that may be numb.

Burn symptoms:

- Red skin
- Pain
- Peeling skin
- Swelling
- Blisters
- White or charred skin
- Shock

What to do:

For first-degree or minor burns:

To help ease the pain and lessen the damage caused by a minor burn, put the burned part in cool water. Do not use ice water. Keep the area in water for at least five minutes.

After flushing or soaking, cover the burn with a dry, sterile bandage to protect the skin from rubbing against things.

The person can take aspirin, acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol[®]), or ibuprofen (e.g., Advil[®], Motrin[®]) for pain. Consult a health care professional about which one is right for the individual.

Make sure the person had a tetanus vaccination in the past 10 years.

First-degree burns will usually heal without further treatment.

For second- and third-degree burns:

With second- and third-degree burns, there is a higher risk of infection. Always consult a health care professional when a person has second- or third-degree burns.

Sunburn

Sunburn is the result of getting too much exposure to ultraviolet rays from the sun. Some people are more resistant to these rays, but anyone with overexposed skin will experience damage.

To prevent the risk of sunburn:

Avoid direct exposure of the skin to sunlight between 10:00 A.M. and 4:00 P.M. when the sun's rays are the strongest.

Wear clothing to cover the skin.

Use a sun-blocking lotion with a sun protective factor (SPF) 15 or higher. Reapply the lotion every hour if the person sweats or gets the skin wet. Wear this lotion throughout every season of the year.

Treat sunburn in the same way that you would treat a burn caused by another source following the guidance listed in this section.

Call help if...

- The burn is a third-degree burn
- The burn is larger than the size of your palm
- The burn is a second-degree burn located on the hands, feet, face, groin, buttocks, or a major joint
- Chemicals or electricity cause the burn
- You are not sure how serious it is
- You see signs of infection—increased pain, redness, swelling, drainage, or pus from the burn
- You see red streaks spreading from the burn
- The person has a fever
- The person shows signs of shock—watch for pale and clammy skin, weakness, bluish lips and fingernails, and a change in consciousness
- The person is dizzy or lightheaded
- The skin is white or charred
- The person inhaled smoke
- The person is not able to breathe

NEVER

- Apply ointment, butter, ice, medications, cream, oil spray, or any household remedy to a severe burn
- Breathe, blow, or cough on the burn
- Disturb blistered or dead skin

- Remove clothing that is stuck to the skin
- Give the person anything by mouth, if there is a severe burn
- Immerse a severe burn in cold water, which can cause shock

Cough

Coughs come in many forms. A cough is your body's way of cleaning its breathing system. If a person has a cough accompanied by phlegm (productive), do not take medicine to stop the cough. Instead, to loosen the phlegm the person can drink lots of water, breathe hot water vapors, or take an over-the-counter medicine.

Types of coughs:

- **Dry cough with little or no phlegm**—cold or flu, measles, smoker's cough
- **Productive cough with a little or a lot of phlegm**—bronchitis, pneumonia, asthma, smoker's cough
- **Cough with a wheeze or trouble breathing**—asthma, whooping cough, heart trouble, something stuck in the throat
- **Chronic cough**—tuberculosis, asthma, chronic bronchitis, emphysema, smoker's cough
- **Cough with blood**—tuberculosis, pneumonia (yellow or green phlegm), cancer of the lungs or throat

To ease the symptoms of a cough:

- Drink lots of water
- Breathe hot-water vapors
- Mix one part honey and one part lemon juice—take a teaspoon every two to three hours
- Do not smoke

Try to find out the cause of the cough and treat it.

To prevent a cough, do not smoke.

To cure a cough, treat the illness that causes it—and do not smoke.

To calm a cough and loosen phlegm, drink lots of water—and do not smoke.

Call help if...

The person has any of the following symptoms:

- A fever over 101 that lasts for 3 days
- A cough that lasts more than 2 to 3 weeks
- A cough along with a fever
- A cough along with shortness of breath or bloody phlegm

Diabetes

Diabetes is a chronic disease that affects the way the body uses food for energy. Diabetes happens when the body does not produce enough of a hormone called insulin. Insulin allows the body's cells to use sugar for energy. Diabetes can also happen when the body is not able to use insulin correctly. When insulin is not available or not used correctly, the level of sugar in the body goes up and the cells do not get the energy they need. If the level of sugar in the body stays up for too long, it can cause problems for many other parts of the body including the eyes, heart, and kidneys. It is dangerous to have sugar that is too high or too low.

Controlling blood sugar is the best way not to have problems from diabetes.

Symptoms of High Blood Sugar

Feeling thirsty
Increased urination (pee) especially at night
Warm, dry skin
Blurry vision
Sleepiness and trouble waking up

Symptoms of Low Blood Sugar

Nausea
Nervousness
Cold, wet skin
Fast heartbeat
Irritability
Confusion
Seizures
Loss of consciousness

What to do:

For high blood sugar—hyperglycemia:

- Drink lots of water
- If they take medication for diabetes, have them take their medication

For low blood sugar—hypoglycemia:

- Eat or drink some form of sugar such as a small package of table sugar, fruit juice, or a non-diet soda

Call help if...

The person has any of the following symptoms:

- Fast or deep breathing
- Is sweaty
- Has a fruity breath odor
- Has a seizure
- Seems confused or unsteady on foot

- Is slow or unable to wake up

Diarrhea

When a person has loose or watery stools, it is diarrhea. Diarrhea can have many causes and can be mild or serious. It can be acute (begins suddenly and is severe) or it can be chronic (lasting many days). The best way to prevent diarrhea is to wash your hands often and correctly. For most cases of diarrhea, medication is not necessary.

The biggest danger with diarrhea is dehydration. For this reason, it is important that the person drink a large quantity of liquids. It is also important for the person with diarrhea to eat food as soon as able to do so. Even if the person does not feel like eating food or drinking liquids, it is necessary to do so to prevent dehydration. Encourage the person to eat small amounts of food and drink liquids many times throughout the day.

What to ask:

- How many times per day does the diarrhea happen?
- Is the diarrhea loose or watery?
- Is there blood or mucus in the diarrhea?
- How many times per day does the person urinate (pee)?
- What color is the urine (pee)?
- Does the person feel dizzy when standing?
- Does the person have a fever?

When individuals vomit or feel too sick to eat, they should drink:

Liquids—taken in small sips

Water
Broth from rice, corn, or potatoes
Broth from chicken, meat, eggs, or beans
Kool-Aid® or other sweetened drinks
Rehydration drinks such as Gatorade® or other sports drinks

As soon as someone is able to eat, the person should eat a selection of the foods below and also continue to drink fluids:

Solids

Bananas
Rice or oatmeal
Dry toast
Applesauce
Eggs
Beans or lentils cooked and smashed
Potatoes
Chicken, fish, or other well-cooked meat

Signs of Dehydration:

- Extreme thirst
- Little or no urine—urine is dark yellow
- Dizzy feeling when person stands
- Sudden weight loss
- Dry mouth
- Sunken eyes or no tears
- Loss of elasticity or stretchiness of the skin

Call help if...

- The diarrhea has mucus or blood
- The person has severe diarrhea with fever
- The diarrhea is yellow or bad-smelling with bubbles or froth
- The person has diarrhea with signs of dehydration
- The diarrhea lasts for more than 5 days

Emergencies Caused by Cold

Cold or wet climate conditions can expose the body to many illnesses that can range from mild to life threatening. All exposure-related illnesses require medical attention to assess severity and to determine the appropriate treatment.

Cold-related illnesses include:

Frostnip—causes numbness or blue-white skin color for a short time, but normal feeling and color return quickly when warmed.

Frostbite—freezing of the skin and tissue under the skin; the skin looks blue and feels cold and numb. It can be stiff or like rubber.

Trench foot—happens with skin exposure to cold and moisture, but not freezing temperatures. The skin does not freeze but looks pale and blistered.

Hypothermia—an abnormally low body temperature is a medical emergency. Symptoms include shivering, cold, pale or blue skin, unsteady balance, slurred speech, numb hands and fingers, stiff muscles, slow pulse, slow breathing, sleepiness, confusion, or loss of consciousness.

To prevent cold-related illnesses:

- Do not drink alcohol and stay outside
- Do not stay outside during windy or wet weather
- Do not sleep on wet or damp bedding
- Place a barrier between your body and the ground whenever possible
- Dress with warm clothing that covers all of your body including face, hands, and feet
- Change clothes if your skin gets wet
- Do not wear wet clothing

Call help if...

The person experienced exposure to a cold or wet environment and is:

- Not breathing
- Unconscious
- Slow breathing
- Confused, or disoriented
- Has slurred speech
- Has unsteady balance

Emergencies Caused by Heat

Hot or humid climate conditions can expose the body to many illnesses that can range from mild to life threatening. All exposure-related illnesses require medical attention to assess severity and determine the appropriate treatment. Note that a high temperature caused by a fever is different from a high body temperature caused by a heat-related illness.

Heat-related illnesses include:

Heat rash—blocked sweat ducts to the skin itch.

Heat cramps—muscles in the body tighten up because they have lost water, salt, and minerals.

Heat edema—swelling in the hands or legs when a person sits or stands too long in a hot environment.

Heat exhaustion—fainting when a person does not drink enough liquids to replace lost fluid after being in a hot environment.

Heat stroke—when the body fails to regulate its own temperature and the body temperature continues to rise, often above 105 degrees or higher. ***This is a medical emergency.***

To prevent heat-related illnesses:

- Avoid heavy activity during the hottest part of the day (10:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M.)
- Increase fluid intake when exercising or working outside in hot weather
- Drink fluids on a schedule every two hours such as rehydration drinks, juices, or water
- Wear a hat when outside
- Check your urine—it should be clear to pale yellow and there should be a large amount
- Do not spend too much time in the sun
- Take frequent breaks in the shade
- If you have to stand for a long time, flex your leg muscles often
- Do not drink caffeine or alcohol

Call help if...

The person experienced exposure to a hot environment and:

- Is unconscious or has seizures
- Difficulty breathing
- Confusion, restlessness or anxiety
- Hot, dry, red skin with no sweating or lots of sweating
- Vomiting and diarrhea

The Flu

A virus that comes around once a year causes the flu (influenza). It usually comes in the late fall or winter months. Most people who get the flu will get over it in a few days. They will only need to treat the symptoms of the flu and rest. However, the flu can be very dangerous if the person already has a problem with the heart or lungs. It can also be very dangerous for a person who has diabetes or has HIV infection, the virus that causes AIDS.

Symptoms of the flu:

- Fever (usually high)
- Headache
- Muscle aches
- Chills
- Extreme tiredness
- Sore throat
- Dry cough
- Runny nose

To ease the symptoms of the flu:

- Drink lots of water
- Take aspirin, acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (e.g., Advil®, Motrin®) for fever, chills, headaches, or muscle aches—ask a health care professional which one is right for you
- Gargle with warm salt water for a sore throat
- Do not smoke

Get a flu shot every year. *You cannot get the flu from a flu shot.* Sometimes the shot will make you feel achy or tired. You may have a low fever or chills. Your arm may be sore at the injection site. These symptoms should only last a couple of days. You do not have the flu.

People who are allergic to eggs should not get a flu shot.

Call help if...

The person has any of the following symptoms:

- A fever over 101 that last for 3 days
- Heart or lung problems
- Diabetes
- HIV or AIDS
- Difficulty breathing

Is It a Cold or the Flu?

<i>Symptom</i>	<i>Cold</i>	<i>Flu</i>
Aches and pains	mild	common/severe
Chest ache	rare	occasionally
Cough	mild/moderate	moderate/severe
Fatigue/exhaustion	mild	common/severe/early
Fever	rare or low	high
Headache	rare	common
Runny nose	occasionally	common
Sneezing	common	occasionally
Sore throat	common	occasionally
Weakness	mild	common/severe

Foot Care

Foot care is arguably one of the most important aspects of homeless health care. Many ailments can cause trouble for the feet. While these ailments range from minor to life threatening, it is important to recognize and treat them before they cause unnecessary problems.

Common foot problems include:

Blisters—small pockets of fluid caused when a rough surface rubs against the skin. The blister forms to protect the skin underneath.

Bunions—bumps that form on the outside of the joint at the bottom of the big toe; a bunion causes the big toe to bend toward or sometimes cross over the second toe.

Hammer toe—a toe that bends up at the middle joint.

Calluses and corns—areas of the skin that get thick and hard in response to pressure or friction; calluses are usually on the soles of the feet and corns are usually on the toes.

Tinea pedis—also known as athlete’s foot, a fungal infection that grows when the feet are warm and moist; it causes the feet to itch, crack, peel, and have a bad smell.

Trench foot—happens with skin exposure to cold and moisture but not freezing temperatures. The skin does not freeze but looks pale and blistered.

Frostbite—a freezing of the skin and tissue under the skin; the skin looks blue and feels cold and numb. It can be stiff or like rubber.

How to treat a blister:

- If the blister is small or closed, leave it alone
- Cover the blister with a loose bandage
- If the blister opens, wash the area with soap and water
- Apply an antibiotic ointment such as Bacitracin[®] or Neosporin[®]
- Change the bandage every day to lower the chance of infection
- Take the bandage off at night to let the area dry

How to treat bunions and hammer toes:

Once bunions or hammer toes form, there is usually no way to get rid of them. You can place soft padding such as cotton, a donut-shaped pad, or moleskin over the area to keep it from rubbing against the shoe.

How to treat calluses and corns:

Soak the foot in warm water for 5–10 minutes. Then rub the callus or corn with an emery board (fingernail file) or a pumice stone. You may need to repeat this process several times over several days until the skin wears away. You can place soft padding such as cotton, a donut-shaped pad, or moleskin over the area to keep it from rubbing against the shoe.

How to treat tinea pedis:

- Wash and dry the feet every day
- Dry between each toe
- Apply an antifungal cream such as Lotrimin® or Lamisil® to the entire foot—be certain to spread the cream between each toe
- Change to clean socks every day
- Apply an antifungal foot powder inside of shoes
- If possible, take socks off each night and allow the feet to be in open air

To avoid or reduce the risk of trench foot or frostbite:

- Do not drink alcohol and stay outside
- Do not stay outside during windy or wet weather
- Change socks and shoes if feet are wet
- Dress with warm clothing that covers all of the body including face, hands, and feet

Call help if...

- You suspect trench foot or frostbite, as these are foot problems that require a medical evaluation
- The person has diabetes

Heart Attack

A heart attack is what happens when there is a block to the heart's blood supply. If the blood supply cuts off completely, the heart muscle begins to die. The signs of a heart attack can be mild or strong. Women and men often have different symptoms. For this reason, if you suspect a heart attack, seek medical attention immediately.

Signs of a heart attack:

- Chest pain in the center of the chest
- Chest pain that can spread to the neck, shoulders, or arms
- A squeezing or heavy pressure on the chest

Other symptoms that the person may notice with or without chest pain:

- Shortness of breath
- Bad indigestion
- Nausea and vomiting
- Heavy sweating
- Pain in the jaw
- Pain in the middle of the back
- A feeling that “something bad is about to happen”

Call 911!

Heart attack is a medical emergency, even if the symptoms go away quickly.

DO NOT WAIT...CALL 911

Hepatitis A

Hepatitis A is a liver infection caused by the hepatitis A virus. This infection usually causes the liver to swell for a period and most people will recover without long-term liver problems.

How hepatitis A spreads:

Hepatitis A spreads through oral contact (mouth) with stool (poop) that contains the virus.

You can get hepatitis A if you:

- Eat food prepared by someone who does not wash hands well after using the bathroom
- Eat raw or undercooked shellfish, such as clams or oysters
- Eat uncooked food or drink tap water in a developing country

Symptoms:

People infected with the hepatitis A virus may have symptoms that include tiredness, sore muscles, nausea, fever, headache, loss of appetite and weight loss, pain on the right side of the abdomen under the rib cage, yellow skin and eyes, and dark urine.

The symptoms usually appear 2 to 7 weeks after infection. The symptoms usually last less than 2 months.

Prevention:

A vaccination that includes a series of two shots can prevent hepatitis A. It is also important to wash your hands before eating.

Call help if...

The person has any of the following symptoms:

- Is very agitated or angry
- Is not able to think clearly
- Has yellow skin or the white part of the eyes are yellow
- Swelling in the face, hands, feet, legs, or stomach
- Bleeding from the nose, mouth, or rectum
- Is slow or unable to wake up
- Is unconscious

Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B is a liver infection caused by the hepatitis B virus. This infection usually causes the liver to swell for a period.

How hepatitis B spreads:

Hepatitis B spreads through contact with the blood and body fluids of an infected person.

You can get hepatitis B if you:

- Have sex without using a condom
- Share needles to inject drugs
- Get a tattoo or piercing with tools not cleaned properly
- Share razors or toothbrushes

Symptoms:

People infected with the hepatitis B virus may have symptoms that include tiredness, sore muscles, sore joints, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea or constipation, fever, headache, loss of appetite, skin rash, and yellow skin and eyes.

The symptoms appear 6–24 weeks after infection. The symptoms usually last for 1–2 months.

Prevention:

A vaccination that includes a series of three shots can prevent hepatitis B. It is also important to remember to use a condom when having sex; not to share needles, razors, or toothbrushes; and to wear disposable gloves if you have to touch blood or other body fluids. Many people are allergic to latex rubber. In order to eliminate the risk of an allergic reaction, use non-latex gloves.

Call help if...

The person has any of the following symptoms:

- Is very agitated or angry
- Is not able to think clearly
- Has yellow skin or the white part of the eyes are yellow
- Swelling in the face, hands, feet, legs or stomach
- Bleeding from the nose, mouth, or rectum
- Is slow or unable to wake up
- Is unconscious

Hepatitis C

Hepatitis C is a liver infection caused by the hepatitis C virus. This infection can cause permanent liver damage.

How hepatitis C spreads:

Hepatitis C spreads when your blood contacts with the blood of an infected person.

You can get hepatitis C if you:

- Share needles or other equipment to inject drugs
- Had a transfusion in the United States before 1992
- Get stuck with a needle that has blood from an infected person on it

Symptoms:

People infected with the hepatitis C virus may have symptoms that include tiredness, sore muscles, sore joints, stomach pain, itchy skin, yellow skin and eyes, and dark urine.

The symptoms may appear 2–24 weeks after infection, but many people infected with hepatitis C do not have symptoms. For this reason, many people have hepatitis C for many years before diagnosis.

Prevention:

There is no vaccine to prevent hepatitis C, but people can reduce their risk of infection if they do not share needles, and wear disposable gloves if they have to touch blood. Many people are allergic to latex rubber. In order to eliminate the risk of an allergic reaction, use non-latex gloves.

Call help if...

The person has any of the following symptoms:

- Is very agitated or angry
- Is not able to think clearly
- Has yellow skin or the white part of the eyes are yellow
- Bleeding from the nose, mouth, or rectum
- Is slow or unable to wake up
- Is unconscious

HIV/AIDS

Human immunodeficiency virus, or HIV, is a virus that attacks the immune system. The immune system is the body's defense system. It fights against disease. Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), caused by HIV, is the late stage of infection with HIV. The time between the infection of a person with HIV and the time that AIDS develops can be as many as 10 to 12 years.

How HIV spreads:

It spreads through contact with infected blood, semen, and vaginal fluid.

You can get HIV if you:

- Have sex without a condom with someone who has HIV
- Share needles or other equipment to inject drugs
- Get stuck with a needle that has blood from an infected person on it

Note: HIV can also pass from a mother to her baby during pregnancy, birth, or breastfeeding.

Symptoms:

There may not be symptoms in the beginning. Sometimes people mistake the symptoms for the flu. They include:

- Fever
- Sore throat
- Headache
- Muscle aches or joint pain
- Skin rash
- Swollen glands

These symptoms usually go away in 2–3 weeks. They may not return for as many as 10–12 years. During these years, the virus grows inside of the person's body and slowly attacks the immune system. Then symptoms may reappear again. These symptoms include:

- Swollen glands
- Very tired
- Weight loss
- Fever
- Night sweats

The only way to know if a person is infected with HIV is to have an

HIV test performed by a health care provider.

Today, there are many medicines available to help a person who has HIV stay healthy for a longer period. These medicines do not cure HIV. They will not help prevent the spread of HIV.

Prevention:

There is no vaccine to prevent HIV. A person can reduce the risk of infection by:

- Always using a condom when having sex—including oral, vaginal, or anal sex
- Not sharing needles or other equipment to inject drugs
- Wearing disposable gloves when having to touch blood—many people are allergic to latex rubber; in order to eliminate the risk of an allergic reaction, use non-latex gloves

Call help if...

The person has any of the following symptoms:

- Has a seizure
- Is unconscious
- Has weakness in an arm, leg, or one side of the body
- Is unable to move any part of the body
- Is unable to stand or walk
- Has a fever above 101 for more than 24 hours
- Has a fever above 103 at any time
- Has trouble breathing
- Coughs blood or thick mucus
- Has numbness or tingling in any part of the body
- Has diarrhea for longer than 1 day
- Bleeding from the nose or gums
- Has blood in the urine or stool
- Has a headache that will not go away with aspirin, acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol[®]), or ibuprofen (e.g., Advil[®], Motrin[®])
- Has a change in vision
- Has a change or decline in mental ability, such as confusion or disorientation

Lice



Lice are tiny bugs that live on the hair of a person's body.

There are three types of lice:

- **Head lice** live on people's hair. They make the head itch. The eggs often look like dandruff, but do not pull off the hair easily.
- **Body lice** live on people's clothes, especially in the seams. They do not usually live on the skin. People usually find they have body lice when they get a rash from scratching.
- **Pubic lice** live on people's pubic hair and most commonly spread by close body contact or sexual contact.

How you get lice:

Lice spread when a person with lice has contact with another person with lice. This contact can be direct, such as touch; intimate sexual contact; or when people share hats, combs, and other things that touch the head or hair. They can also spread by sharing things like clothing or bed sheets that have body lice on them.

How to get rid of lice:

Ask medical staff about shampoos that will kill lice on the head or on the pubic hair. Have persons wash their hair and leave the shampoo in for 10 minutes. Then, rinse and comb the hair with a fine-toothed comb. The combing will help to remove the eggs from the hair. Some people prefer to cut or shave their hair instead of combing it.

Have individuals take off their clothing and shower carefully. Body lice live in clothing, not on the skin, so they need to wash every piece of clothing in hot water and dry in a dryer for 30 minutes. Instruct not to put clothing back on or sleep in the same bed after showering until they wash and dry everything. Soak all combs and brushes in the lice shampoo diluted with water. One can also use a solution of 1 part bleach to 10 parts water.

Individuals should see a medical staff person after 1 week to make sure the lice are gone. Sometimes a person requires treatment again.

How to keep from getting lice:

The best way to keep from getting lice is not to share clothing, hats, combs, and other personal things. Tell people who complain about itching or rashes to see a doctor or nurse. If you were close to a person with lice, ask a doctor or nurse to evaluate you for lice. If the person has pubic lice, ask a medical person to examine him or her for other sexually-transmitted diseases.

Nosebleed

How to stop a nosebleed:

1. Sit quietly and lean forward.
2. Blow the nose gently to remove mucus and blood.
3. Pinch the nose firmly right below the nose bone for 10 minutes or until the bleeding stops.
4. If these steps do not stop the bleeding, pack the nostril with a wad of cotton. Leave part of the cotton outside of the nose. If possible, soak the cotton in hydrogen peroxide or Vaseline. Then pinch the nose firmly again.

Do not let go for 10 minutes or more. Do not tip the head backwards.

Leave the cotton in place for a few hours. After the bleeding stops, remove the cotton very carefully.

If the bleeding does not stop by pinching the nose, have the person put a cork or other small object between the teeth and lean forward. Have the person sit quietly and try not to swallow until the bleeding stops. The cork will help to keep from swallowing, which will give the blood a better chance to clot.

Call help if...

- The bleeding does not stop after 10 minutes

Adapted from: O'Connell, J. J., Swain, S. E., Daniels, C. L., & Allen, J. S. (Eds). (2004). *The health care of homeless persons: A manual of communicable diseases and common problems in shelters and on the streets*. Boston, MA: Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program; Nashville, TN: National Health Care for the Homeless Program.

Scabies

Scabies are tiny bugs called mites. They make tunnels under the skin and cause itching. Sometimes the itching is worse at night. They can live anywhere on the body but mostly you will see them:

- Between the fingers and toes
- On the wrists
- Around the waist
- On the genitals

How you get scabies:

Scabies spread by touching the affected skin of a person who has scabies. Scabies also spread by sharing things like clothing or bed sheets of a person with scabies. Sometimes a person with scabies will scratch his or her skin so much that infection results. The infection will also need treatment.

How you get rid of scabies:

Ask medical staff about a lotion that will kill scabies. Have the person follow these steps to get rid of scabies:

1. Trim nails so the scratching does not cause an infection.
2. Take a shower, and then wait for a few minutes for the skin to cool down.
3. Spread the lotion on the skin as directed.
4. Do not put on any other cream, ointment or body lotion.
5. Wait 8 to 12 hours. If a person washes his or her hands during this time, reapply the lotion to the hands.
6. Take another shower to rinse off the lotion.
7. Put on new or clean clothes washed in hot water and dried in a hot dryer for 30 minutes.
8. Wash sheets and blankets the morning after the person finishes treatment.

Check with medical staff in 1 week to see if the person needs to repeat the treatment.

How you can keep from getting scabies:

The best way to keep from getting scabies is not to share clothing or bed linens. Encourage people who complain about itching or rashes to see medical staff. If a person was near someone with scabies and the skin begins to itch, ask a doctor or nurse to evaluate for scabies.

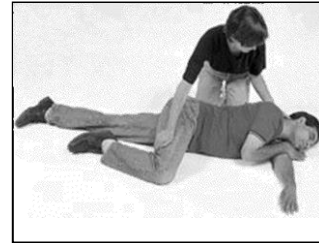
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Seizure

A seizure happens when unusual electrical activity in the brain causes abnormal movements or behavior. The seizure can vary in intensity. Sometimes the person having the seizure goes into a kind of altered state for a short period, and may look dazed or stare into space. For many seizures, it is enough to stay by the person and wait for the seizure to pass. The most important thing is to be calm.

DO:

- Protect the person from injury—remove any nearby hazards
- Guide the person gently to the floor if he or she is standing or sitting
- Place something soft such as a pillow or rolled up coat under the head to protect the head from injury
- Loosen ties or shirt collars
- When the shaking part of the seizure ends, roll the person onto his or her side—it does not matter if it is the right or left side—this step will help to keep the airway clear
- Remain quietly reassuring
- Stay until the person regains full consciousness



under

You cannot stop a seizure, so do not try.

DO NOT:

- Shake or hold the person having the seizure
- Put anything in the person's mouth, not even medicine
- Try to move the person unless in danger

Call help if...

- The person having the seizure is pregnant, injured, or diabetic
- The seizure happens in water
- The seizure lasts more than five minutes
- A second seizure begins before the person regains consciousness
- The person does not begin breathing normally and does not return to consciousness after the seizure stops
- This seizure is the first one

After the seizure, the some people may experience confusion or sleepiness. Permit them to rest.

Adapted from: Kraybill, K. & Olivet, J. (2006). *Shelter health: Essentials of care for people living in shelter* (2nd ed.). Nashville, TN: National Health Care for the Homeless Council.

Signs of Dangerous Illness

- Loss of a large amount of blood from anywhere in the body
- Coughing up blood
- Blue color in the lips, fingernails, or toenails
- Great difficulty breathing
- You cannot wake up the person
- So weak that the person faints
- A day or more without being able to urinate (pee)
- A day or more without being able to drink liquids
- Heavy vomiting or diarrhea that lasts for more than 1 day
- Black stools like tar
- Vomit containing blood or feces
- Strong continuous stomach pain with vomiting in a person who does not have diarrhea or cannot have a bowel movement
- Any strong continuous pain that lasts for more than 3 days
- Stiff neck with an arched back, with or without a stiff jaw
- More than one seizure in someone with a fever or serious illness
- High fever above 101 that treatment does not bring down or lasts more than 4 or 5 days
- Weight loss over an extended period
- Blood in the urine
- Sores that keep growing and do not go away with treatment
- A lump in any part of the body that keeps getting bigger
- Any trauma to the head, especially if the person cannot remember how, where, or when it happened
- Any injury to the eye

If you work with a person who has any of these symptoms, get

medical help immediately.

Skin Problems

General rules for treating skin problems

There are hundreds of diseases of the skin. Although many skin problems need specific treatment, there are a few general rules that will often help.

Rule 1:

If the affected area is **hot** and painful or has pus, treat it with **heat**. You can put hot, moist compresses on it.

Rule 2:

If the affected area itches, stings, or oozes clear fluid, treat it with **cold**. You can put cool, wet compresses on it.

Rule 3:

If the affected skin areas are on parts of the body **exposed to sun**, **protect them from the sun**.

Rule 4:

If the affected skin areas are on parts of the body **covered by clothing**, **expose them to direct sunlight for 10 to 20 minutes two or three times a day**.

Call help if...

- A skin problem is serious or gets worse in spite of treatment
- The person has a fever or chills
- The person has swollen lymph nodes
- There is a red or dark line above the infected area
- There is a bad smell coming from the area

Sore Throat

A sore throat can result from a cold or allergy. When a person has a stuffy nose or cold, the congestion in the nose can drain into the throat and cause irritation and soreness. Antibiotics will only help a sore throat if the person has an infection in the throat as well.

To ease the symptoms of a sore throat:

- Mix one teaspoon of salt in eight ounces of warm water; gargle with this solution at least one time every hour
- Use throat lozenges
- Drink lots of water
- Do not smoke

Call help if...

The person has any of the following symptoms:

- A fever over 101 that last for 3 days
- A sore throat with white patches on it, or one that makes it difficult to swallow liquids
- A sore throat for more than 2 weeks

Stroke

A stroke happens when a blood vessel that supplies blood to the brain partially or completely blocks. This block causes a reduction in blood to the brain. The person will have a loss of movement in the part of the body controlled by the part of the brain that has the loss of blood flow.

Here is an easy method to notice the signs of a stroke. If a person appears to have any of these symptoms:

REMEMBER to act **F.A.S.T.**

Face: Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face droop?

Arms: Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?

Speech: Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence. Are the words slurred? Can the person repeat the sentence correctly?

Time: If the person shows any of these symptoms, time is important.

Call 911!

Stroke is a medical emergency, even if the symptoms go away quickly.

DO NOT WAIT... CALL 911

Stuffy or Runny Nose

A stuffy nose (congestion) or a runny nose can result from a cold or allergy. If the congestion stays in the nose, it may lead to a sinus or ear infection. If the congestion is only in the nose, the person does not need an antibiotic.

To ease the symptoms of a stuffy or runny nose:

- Drink lots of water.
- Breathe hot water vapors.
- Mix one-half teaspoon of salt in eight ounces of clean water (if you have baking soda, add a pinch of it, too); pour a small amount into the palm of your hand and sniff the liquid up your nose, one nostril at a time—repeat this process many times until you use all of your salt-water solution.
- Do not smoke.

Call help if...

The person has any of the following symptoms:

- A fever over 101 that last for 3 days
- Facial pain over forehead or cheeks
- Pain in the ears

Tuberculosis

Tuberculosis (TB) is an infection that is most often in the lungs but can spread to other parts of the body. The cause of TB is bacteria. The treatment is antibiotics.

How TB spreads:

Tuberculosis spreads through the air when a person with active disease of the lungs or throat exhales air by coughing or sneezing. Infection results if people nearby breathe in the air that has the bacteria.

It is either latent (dormant) or active:

Latent TB—the person has the TB-causing bacteria in his or her body but cannot spread the disease to others. The person with latent TB does not feel sick and may not have symptoms but will usually have a positive TB skin test. Most people with latent TB do not know that they have the disease. They can still develop active TB.

Active TB—the TB infection spreads in the body. The person will usually have a positive TB skin test. If the infection is in the lungs, the person can spread the disease to others.

Symptoms:

People with a latent TB infection cannot spread the disease. People with an active TB infection may have symptoms such as:

- A bad cough that lasts 3 weeks or longer
- Chest pain or shortness of breath
- Cough with blood
- Weight loss
- No appetite
- Tired
- Fever
- Chills
- Sweating at night

Call help if...

- You work with someone who has any of the symptoms listed above—get the person to medical help immediately

Upper Respiratory Problems

Upper respiratory problems include the common cold, cough, stuffy or runny nose, fullness in the ears, or a sore throat. Because many different viruses cause these symptoms, there is not a cure. Viruses will usually last 7–10 days and then go away by themselves.

Antibiotics will not make a virus better. However, one can do a lot to prevent getting sick with the common cold. If a person already has a cold, there is a lot that one can do to ease the symptoms while waiting for it to go away by itself.

How colds spread:

Colds most likely spread when people sneeze or cough germs into the air, and then another person breathes in those germs. Colds also spread when people with colds touch their noses, or cough into their hands and then touch another person.

How to reduce the risk of getting or spreading a cold:

- Wash your hands often, especially after blowing your nose
- Always sneeze or cough into a paper tissue; throw the tissue away after one use
- Do not use cloth handkerchiefs
- If you do not have a paper tissue, sneeze or cough into the inside fold of your arm at the elbow
- Keep your hands away from your nose, mouth, or eyes
- Avoid crowded areas
- Drink lots of fluids
- Do not smoke

Call help if...

The person has any of the following symptoms:

- A fever over 101 that last for 3 days
- Chest pain or difficulty breathing
- Facial pain over forehead or cheeks
- Pain in the ears
- A cough with green phlegm, or blood in the phlegm
- A sore throat with white patches on it, or a sore throat that makes it difficult to swallow liquids
- A cold for more than 2 weeks

Vomiting

People may have an occasional upset stomach with vomiting. Vomiting can have many causes and can be mild or serious. It can be acute (begins suddenly and is severe) or it can be chronic (lasting many days). For most cases of vomiting, medication is not necessary. However, two dangers of vomiting are dehydration and aspiration (breathing vomit into the lungs).

It is important that the person vomiting drink a large quantity of liquids. It is also important for the person to resume eating food as soon as possible. Even if a person does not feel like eating food or drinking liquids, it is important to do so to prevent dehydration. Encourage the person to eat small amounts of food and drink liquids many times throughout the day.

What to ask:

- How many times per day does the vomiting happen?
- Is there blood in the vomit?
- Is there anything that looks like coffee grounds (indicator of dried blood) in the vomit?
- Does the person have diarrhea with the vomiting?
- Does the person have a fever?

What to do:

- While the vomiting is severe, eat nothing
- Sip a cola drink or ginger ale
- Sip an herbal tea, such as chamomile
- Sip a rehydration drink, such as Gatorade®

Call help if...

- The vomit has blood
- The vomit has anything in it that looks like coffee grounds
- The person's vomiting is violent or the vomit is dark green, brown, or smells like stool
- The person has constant pain in the abdomen—especially if he or she cannot pass stool
- Vomiting with a fever above 101
- Vomiting with signs of dehydration
- Vomiting that lasts for more than 24 hours

Wounds

Begin by putting on disposable gloves:

Disposable gloves come in many forms: **latex** (natural rubber); **nitrile** or **neoprene** (synthetic rubber); and **polyethylene** (plastic). Each of these types of gloves will create a barrier against contamination. Many people are allergic to latex rubber. In order to eliminate the risk of an allergic reaction, use non-latex gloves.

To clean a wound:

Wash the skin around the wound with normal saline solution (salt water) if you have it. If not, use soap and clean, cool water. If there is dirt or dried blood inside of the wound, try to irrigate it with the normal saline or water. You can use a piece of gauze to help remove the dirt or dried blood, but make sure that the gauze is sterile (comes from an unopened package). Dirt left in the wound can cause infection.

To treat a wound:

You can use a small amount of antibiotic ointment such as Bacitracin[®] or Neosporin[®] on the edges of the wound to help heal the wound.

Never put alcohol or tincture of iodine directly into a wound; doing so will damage the flesh and make healing slower.

To bandage a wound:

After cleaning the wound, place a sterile piece of gauze over the top. It should be light enough to allow air to circulate around the wound but tight enough to protect it from further injury. You will need to change this bandage every day.

How to recognize an infected wound:

An infected wound will be red, swollen, hot, and painful. It may develop pus (abscess) or it may smell bad. An infected wound may cause a fever or a red line may form around the area. If you see a person with a wound and those symptoms, it is very important to get the person to medical help immediately. These wounds are dangerous and, if left untreated, can cause the person to lose the use of the part of the body where the infection is present.

DO NOT WAIT. GET MEDICAL HELP IMMEDIATELY.

Sometimes the person's lymph nodes may become swollen and tender. Lymph nodes (glands) are small traps for germs that form lumps under the skin when they get infected. The lymph nodes closest to the infection will swell.

Location of lymph node

Behind the ears
Below the ears and on the neck
Below the jaw
Armpits
Groin

Infection site

Head or scalp
Ear, face, or head
Teeth or throat
Arm, head, or breast
Leg, foot, genitals, anus

Wounds likely to become infected:

- Dirty wounds or wounds made with dirty objects
- Wounds caused by needles used to inject drugs
- Puncture wounds or other deep wounds that do not bleed much
- Wounds made where animals live
- Large wounds with severe mashing or bruising
- Bite wounds, especially from dogs or people
- Bullet wounds
- Burn wounds

Never close this type of wound. Instead, have the person rest and raise the wound a little higher than the heart. ***Call help immediately.***

Call help if...

- The person has a fever above 101
- The wound is red, swollen, hot, and painful
- The wound has pus or smells bad
- You are not able to clean the wound
- The cause of the wound is any of the things listed above
- The location of the wound is in the chest, head, or abdomen
- The person did not have a tetanus shot in the past 10 years