



PATIENT GUIDE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LEGAL DISCLAIMER	3
HEALTHY CHOICES.....	4
STEPS TO MAKING INFORMED HEALTH DECISIONS.....	4
1. EXPLORE YOUR OPTIONS.....	4
2. RESEARCH RELIABLE HEALTH INFORMATION	4
3. HAVE YOUR OWN OPINION	4
4. TRY IT OUT.....	4
5. MAKE A PLAN	5
WORK WITH YOUR DOCTOR	5
DO YOUR PART	5
1. MAKE SURE YOU ARE TAKING PROPER CARE OF YOURSELF	5
2. PRACTICE SELF MEDICAL CARE AT HOME	5
3. BE PREPARED WHEN ATTENDING OFFICE VISITS.....	6
4. PARTICIPATE ACTIVELY DURING MEDICAL VISITS	6
5. GATHER ALL INFORMATION REGARDING YOUR HEALTH PROBLEM.....	6
LOCATE A DOCTOR WHO WILL BE YOUR PARTNER	7
1. EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING	7
2. FINDING A DOCTOR WITH AVAILABILITY	7
3. PARTNER POTENTIAL	8
4. WHEN TO CHANGE	8
ENSURING THE QUALITY OF YOUR CARE	8
1. SHOULD I SEE A DOCTOR?	8
2. SHOULD I SCHEDULE AN EXAM (X-RAY, BLOOD TEST, CT, MRI, ETC.) TO DIAGNOSE THE PROBLEM?	9
3. SHOULD I MEDICATE TO TREAT MY HEALTH ISSUE?	9
4. IS SURGERY NECESSARY TO TREAT MY HEALTH ISSUE?	9
5. SHOULD I GO TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM?	9
LIVING A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE	9
1. PHYSICAL ACTIVITY.....	10
2. EATING RIGHT	10
3. KEEP A STABLE AND HEALTHY BODY WEIGHT.....	11
<i>How Do I Know If I Have a Healthy Body Weight?.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Setting Achievable Goals for Yourself.....</i>	<i>11</i>



<i>Steps to Making a Change</i>	12
4. BE SMOKE FREE	12
5. STAY CLEAR OF DRUGS AND EXCESS ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION	13
6. LEARN HOW TO MANAGE YOUR STRESS	13
7. TAKE PROPER CARE OF YOUR TEETH	13
MEDICAL SCREENINGS AND EXAMINATIONS	14
1. HEIGHT AND WEIGHT ASSESSMENT	14
2. VISION SCREENING	14
3. HEARING TEST	14
4. BLOOD PRESSURE	14
5. BREAST CANCER SCREENING	15
6. CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING TEST	15
7. CHOLESTEROL	15
8. DIABETES	15
9. PROSTATE CANCER SCREENING	15
10. SELF EXAMINATIONS	15
11. PREGNANT WOMEN	15
12. TUBERCULIN TEST	16
EMERGENCIES AND FIRST AID	16
1. BITES AND SCRATCHES	16
<i>Insect Bites and Stings</i>	17
<i>Prevention</i>	17
<i>Treatment from Home</i>	17
<i>When to Call a Health Professional</i>	17
2. BLEEDING UNDER THE NAIL	18
3. ABDOMINAL WOUNDS	18
4. HEAD INJURIES	18
5. BURNS	19
6. HEART ATTACK	20
7. HEAT EXHAUSTION	20
8. HYPERVENTILATION	21
9. KIDNEY STONES	21
10. POISON OR FOOD POISONING	22
11. CHOKING	23



LEGAL DISCLAIMER

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HEALTHY CHOICES

Making wise decisions regarding your health and personal well-being often means including your doctor and treatment professional in the discussion. However only you can decide how you feel about the quality and cost of your health care. One of the most effective things you can do when making health care choices is to combine your personal values with proven medical facts.

STEPS TO MAKING INFORMED HEALTH DECISIONS

As you go through the following steps, please keep in mind that you should take your time when deciding which health choices are best suited for you.

1. EXPLORE YOUR OPTIONS

Ask your doctor to explain the decision that needs to be made as well as all of your options. Clarify that you wish to include him/her in making the best health decision for you.

2. RESEARCH RELIABLE HEALTH INFORMATION

There are many resources available to the public that can help you to make informed health decisions. These resources include the library, Internet and your doctor. Be weary of information provided by companies that may have something to gain from you using their product(s) as well as single studies. Try to base your decision on proven medical information only.

3. HAVE YOUR OWN OPINION

Consider your personal values and needs when making decisions regarding your health. Discuss information with family and any others that may be affected by your decision. Write out a list of positives and negatives as you see them for every option available. Go over this list with your doctor in order to make a fully informed decision.

4. TRY IT OUT

Record the probable outcome of a possible decision. Ask your doctor if your expectation of this outcome is accurate. Inquire about side effects, pain, recovery time, or long term outcomes of that particular option. After all of the above has been considered, see how you then feel about the option.



5. MAKE A PLAN

After you and your doctor have come to a decision, gather all the information you will need to ensure the best possible outcome. Write down the steps you will follow next. Try to think of your decision in a positive light. Be sure to follow your doctor's advice as this will help to ensure success. Keep in mind that when you include your doctor in making a decision, you will share accountability of the result.

WORK WITH YOUR DOCTOR

It is important to establish a good relationship with your doctor. This will play a big role in your ability to make wise choices concerning your health and also, influence the end result of your care. Let your doctor know that you wish to share in making wise health decisions. Your doctor will be glad that you are taking the initiative and actively participating in caring for your health. Good communication with your doctor is imperative.

DO YOUR PART

While you will need to trust that your doctor is holding up their end of the partnership, there are certain skills you will need in order to ensure you are doing your part. The following will help in building these skills:

1. MAKE SURE YOU ARE TAKING PROPER CARE OF YOURSELF

Most health problems are preventable and can be avoided by getting you and your family immunized, being screened for health problems, and making wise health decisions.

2. PRACTICE SELF MEDICAL CARE AT HOME

A lot of medical problems can be handled on your own. All you need to do is trust your common instinct and try to monitor your progress. Use this information, your experience, and others' input to put together a self-care plan.

- Record your self-care plan. Take note of whether or not the self-care plan is effective. In the case that you must call your doctor or nurse, he or she will need to know your symptoms; any attempts you have made to resolve the problem; and how effective your self-care plan was.



- Foresee a time that you will want to call your doctor or nurse if the problem persists. If the severity of your problem escalates, do not hesitate to call for assistance.

3. BE PREPARED WHEN ATTENDING OFFICE VISITS

Most medical appointments are scheduled in 10-15 minute intervals. The better prepared and organized you are, the more you will get out of your time spent during your appointment.

- Make a checklist of questions for your doctor and take it with you to your appointment.
- Bring your self-care plan with you to the appointment along with the recordings of your self-care progress.
- Record your fears of what you think may be wrong. This may be helpful to your doctor.
- Write down your three most desirable questions to ask the doctor, in case there is little time during the exam for questions to be answered.

4. PARTICIPATE ACTIVELY DURING MEDICAL VISITS

- Be up front and honest. Be clear of whether or not you intend to take any prescriptions. Let your health professional know if you are receiving any complimentary treatment, such as herbal supplements, chiropractic therapy or acupuncture. Remember, in order to be a good partner you must let your doctor know what's going on.
- In the case that you doctor may recommend any tests, treatment or medication, find out more about the risks and benefits, alternatives and the probable outcome before following his or her advice.
- Record the diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up plan, as well as any self-care you may try at home. Read your notes back to your doctor to ensure everything will be done correctly. You can bring a friend to record what the doctor tells you so that you may concentrate solely on listening.

5. GATHER ALL INFORMATION REGARDING YOUR HEALTH PROBLEM

If your problem is complicated or you need to further explore your options, begin by asking your doctor if he or she has any further information regarding your health problem that you could take home with you. Many doctors offer these services, which include information from web sites, audio or videotapes, brochures, and reprints from medical journals.

Remember, if you have any questions or concerns about the information you gather, write them down and go over them with your doctor.



LOCATE A DOCTOR WHO WILL BE YOUR PARTNER

Your most valuable health partner will likely be a family doctor or primary care doctor. It is important to find a doctor that will have a clear understanding of what is important to you. When choosing a doctor, there are three very important questions you will need to ask yourself:

- Does this doctor have enough experience and training to make you feel at ease?
- Will this doctor be available when you need him or her?
- Will this doctor participate in a partnership?

1. EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING

Family doctors will usually have extensive knowledge pertaining to most common health problems. Some may have additional training or experience in certain areas. For instance, a doctor may specialize in maternity, sports medicine or environmental issues, among many others. If you have a particular health concern, it is in your best interest to gain information on the doctors in your community. You could ask family and friends, look in the phone directory under Physicians and Surgeons, or contact the BC College of Family Physicians.

2. FINDING A DOCTOR WITH AVAILABILITY

Since health problems rarely present themselves at a time of convenience, it will help to find a doctor that will be available when you need him or her. Before choosing a doctor, call or visit his or her office. Let the receptionist know that you are looking to find a new doctor and follow with these questions:

- Will the doctor accept new patients?
- What are his or her office hours?
- What is the maximum amount of time allowed during a visit?
- Will I be charged for cancelled appointments?
- Will I be able to reach the doctor via e-mail or telephone?
- Who fills in when the doctor is not available?
- Which hospital(s) does the doctor use?



3. PARTNER POTENTIAL

During your first appointment with your new doctor, find out if he or she is willing to participate in shared decision making regarding treatment decisions. Note how you feel during the visit.

- Is he or she a good listener?
- Does he or she speak in terms you can understand?
- Do you feel he or she spends enough time with you?
- Do you think you could build a good working relationship with him or her?

If your answer to any of these questions is no, then you should probably keep looking for another doctor. This may take more than one visit for you to decide.

4. WHEN TO CHANGE

If you are not satisfied with treatment provided by your doctor, it might be time for a change. Before you begin your search for a new doctor, inform your current doctor how you wish to be treated. The doctor may be pleased with the idea of working in partnership with you. Your doctor may be under the impression that you are like most patients, and expect him to do all of the work.

ENSURING THE QUALITY OF YOUR CARE

Doing your part to make healthy decisions can help to ensure that you get proper care, nothing more and nothing less.

You will likely be presented with one or more of the following health decisions at some point. Use the skills you have now learned to help you decide if the treatment in question is right for you.

1. SHOULD I SEE A DOCTOR?

Ignoring health problems cause them to escalate to the point where they are more difficult to treat. If your symptoms suggest that you should see a doctor, don't hesitate.



2. SHOULD I SCHEDULE AN EXAM (X-RAY, BLOOD TEST, CT, MRI, ETC.) TO DIAGNOSE THE PROBLEM?

Until you fully understand how a medical test will help you, do not agree to schedule any. You should only undergo a medical test if the benefits outweigh the risks involved. Any such test cannot be done without your full consent.

3. SHOULD I MEDICATE TO TREAT MY HEALTH ISSUE?

Always inquire about any medication that is prescribed to you. Find out what will happen if you do not take the medication and whether or not there are any alternatives.

4. IS SURGERY NECESSARY TO TREAT MY HEALTH ISSUE?

Gather as much information as you can find about the surgery in question. Take into account your personal needs and values. If you feel that the risks outweigh the benefits, then refrain from having the surgery.

5. SHOULD I GO TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM?

Emergency services are vital in any and all life-threatening situations. However, routine medical services do triple in cost compared to a visit to your doctor's office. They are not designed to care for standard illnesses, and they do not work on a first-come, first-serve basis. If the emergency room is busy, which it often is, patients with routine illnesses are often left waiting for hours. Furthermore, your records could not be available, leaving the emergency room doctors with no information regarding your personal medical history.

Use your judgment wisely when deciding whether or not to attend the emergency room. If you feel that you can apply self-care medical treatment at home and wait for a scheduled appointment with your doctor, then do so. If you are ever unsure as to how to proceed, please contact your doctors' office for assistance.

LIVING A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

The following information focuses on ways to help prevent illness and injury. This will require you to make wise health and lifestyle choices. Some examples include; keeping up to date with immunizations and health screenings, being physically active, eating right, maintaining a healthy body weight, being tobacco-free, avoiding drugs and excess alcohol, managing stress, and taking care of your teeth. Use this as a guide while on the road to a healthier lifestyle.



1. PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Regular physical activity is essential when caring for your overall health and well-being. It, along with a positive outlook and healthy diet, play an important role in how well you feel. Listed below are some major benefits to staying physically active:

- Your risk of premature death and heart disease will be lowered.
- Your risk of developing diabetes, high blood pressure, colon cancer, and osteoporosis will be reduced.
- High cholesterol levels will be lowered.
- It will help build and maintain healthy bones, muscles and joints.

If regular physical activity is already a part of your day-to-day life, continue with all of the good work. If not, there is still some good news.

Recent research studies show that exercise doesn't have to be strenuous to be effective. Most standard activities will raise your heart rate and, if performed on a regular basis, will maintain healthy lungs and heart. Other benefits include stronger muscles as well as improved flexibility.

2. EATING RIGHT

What you choose to eat and how it is prepared affects your health in many aspects. Good food preparation and handling methods make it possible to avoid food-borne illnesses.

Your diet helps you in:

- Meeting your nutritional needs.
- Maintaining a healthy weight.
- Having regular bowel movements.
- Preventing such diseases as heart disease, diabetes, and certain types of cancer.
- Treating diseases like diabetes and high blood pressure.



3. KEEP A STABLE AND HEALTHY BODY WEIGHT

People come in all shapes and sizes. Having a low body weight does not always mean having a healthy body weight. As a matter of fact, your weight could say very little about the state of your health. Genetics play a large part in your weight and body shape as well. Regardless of your body size or shape, your health can be improved by eating a balanced diet, exercising regularly, and feeling good about your body.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE A HEALTHY BODY WEIGHT?

Your total of body fat does not determine your health, but it does influence your risk of certain illnesses such as heart disease. Health is measured not only by weight, but by the following as well:

- Your level of fitness.
- A quality diet and healthy eating habits.
- Existence of high cholesterol.
- Existence of blood pressure, heart disease, and diabetes.
- Placement of fat on your body.

If you are concerned that your weight currently proposes any health risk, talk to a health professional about managing your weight. It is also possible to improve your health while maintaining the same weight. Obesity increases risk of developing high cholesterol, blood pressure, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, sleep apnea, certain cancers, and many other long-term medical problems. If your blood pressure is too high, you could decrease it by losing about 5-10% of your bodyweight. In doing this, you also reduce the risk of heart disease and your blood sugar levels will improve.

SETTING ACHIEVABLE GOALS FOR YOURSELF

Prior to beginning a weight management system, set some realistic goals for yourself. Consider your expectations and willingness to make changes in your lifestyle. Here are some focuses of a proper weight management system:

- Prevention and reduction of health problems.
- More physical activity and increased fitness level.
- Creating positive habit changes for life.



STEPS TO MAKING A CHANGE

Participating in regular physical activity causes your body to burn more calories throughout the day, not just while you exercise. Exercise will increase your muscle mass as well as tone your body. Include a healthy eating regimen and you will be well on your way to a healthier lifestyle.

Eating regular meals helps to maintain a healthy weight. Practice this rather than over-eating, skipping meals or snacking. 'Fast food' is obviously less nutritious than planned meals. Take the time to plan what you are going to eat in order to improve your diet and control your weight. Skipping meals is not a healthy decision as it will most likely cause you to overeat during your next meal.

Reduce the amount of fat in your diet. Try a variety of nutritious foods that are low in fat. Don't concentrate on calorie counting, eat lots of fruits and vegetables, and cut back on the amount of fat you consume.

Take pleasure in what you eat. You can focus on weight control while still enjoying all the foods you love to eat. The trick is to eat sensibly while balancing your calorie intake with calorie burn-off. Here are some tips:

- Split a piece of cake or steak in half. Enjoy half at the restaurant and take home the other half of the portion for later.
- Cut your favorite meal down to one helping and savor every bite.
- Walk to the store to get your treat.

Any food can be part of a healthy diet. The key is finding the proper balance of those foods.

4. BE SMOKE FREE

Whether you've been smoking for 5 years or 30, it's never too late to quit. The risk of stroke, heart disease, cancer and a vast amount of health problems stem from tobacco use.

However, the truth remains that it is not an easy habit to kick. With the right attitude and support, anyone can succeed.

Remember, by quitting smoking you are not only improving the health of yourself, you are improving the health of the people around you. Children exposed to tobacco smoke indoors are prone to ear infections, asthma, and many other health problems. Worst of all, children whose parents smoke are a great deal more likely to become smokers themselves.



Once you begin the process of being smoke-free, it does not take very long for your body to repair itself. The risk of developing other health problems will also decrease.

- The risk of heart attack will be decreased by 50% within a year. Within five years, the risk will be reduced to that of a person who has never smoked.
- Side effects of smoking, such as shortness of breath and cough will decrease. Lung damage caused by smoking is irreversible, however, further damage will be prevented.
- Damage to your lips, mouth, throat and tongue will decrease. Your risk of throat and mouth cancer is reduced.
- People who suffer from asthma will have fewer and less severe attacks.

5. STAY CLEAR OF DRUGS AND EXCESS ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

Saying no to drugs and excess drinking can help you to avoid several diseases and other health problems as well as prevent accidents. Never drink and drive, even if you are drinking in moderation. If you or someone you know suffers from alcoholism or drug abuse, now would be the time to seek help.

6. LEARN HOW TO MANAGE YOUR STRESS

This is almost impossible in some cases, but it doesn't have to affect your health and well-being negatively. Some key factors in managing your stress are eating healthy, exercising regularly, getting enough sleep, avoiding excessive alcohol and drugs, and remaining tobacco-free. Try to identify and cope with the sources of stress in your life.

7. TAKE PROPER CARE OF YOUR TEETH

Try to brush your teeth a minimum of two times per day for approximately 3-5 minutes at a time. Fluoride toothpaste is best, although small children should only use a dollop the size of a pea. The formation of hard mineral build-up can be reduced by using tartar control toothpaste. Flossing daily is an excellent way to remove plaque from below the gums and between teeth.

A mouth-healthy diet is another important part of tooth care. Try to avoid foods that are high in sugar. The more your teeth come into contact with sugar, the more damage it will do. Brushing your teeth before bed is always a good idea. Saliva doesn't cleanse the mouth as well at nighttime, so food left in the mouth at night is more likely to cause cavities.

Regular Dental checkups will help tremendously with the upkeep of your teeth and mouth. Choose a dentist carefully just as you would a doctor. Most people who do not have serious tooth problems only see a dentist once or twice a year.



MEDICAL SCREENINGS AND EXAMINATIONS

One way to take care of your overall health is to detect any disease at an early stage. Often, this will make the disease in question easier to treat. There are two ways of doing this: having the appropriate medical screenings when recommended by a physician and by observing the changes in your body.

Below you will find a health screening schedule which will help you decide which tests and examinations are right for you, when they should be performed, and how often they should be scheduled. Ultimately, the most appropriate preventative screening schedule is the one agreed upon with your doctor. The following schedule is really just a basic guide to help you through the basic medical screening process.

The following recommendations apply to people of average risk in each age group. If you are at higher risk for specific diseases, you may need more frequent examinations. Some factors in determining your risk level may include your overall health, family medical history, how often you exercise, or if you are a smoker/non-smoker, to name a few.

1. HEIGHT AND WEIGHT ASSESSMENT

- Determined by general growth chart during doctor visits from birth-11 years.
- To be scheduled periodically from age 11-64 years.

2. VISION SCREENING

- Screening between ages 3 and 4 years.
- To be scheduled periodically from age 25-64 years.

3. HEARING TEST

- Universal screening of infants for hearing impairment before 3 months of age.
- To be scheduled periodically from age 25-64 if regularly exposed to loud noise.

4. BLOOD PRESSURE

- Screening during doctor visits starting at age 3.
- To be scheduled every 2-5 years from age 11-64.



5. BREAST CANCER SCREENING

- From age 40: annual clinical examination.
- Ages 40-49: mammography every 1 to 2 years.

6. CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING TEST

- To be scheduled every 1-3 years from age 11-64 years.

7. CHOLESTEROL

- Periodically from age 25-64 years. Discuss with health professional.

8. DIABETES

- Every 3 years after age 45.

9. PROSTATE CANCER SCREENING

- Risk increases with age starting at 50 years. Discuss with health professional.

10. SELF EXAMINATIONS

Performing self examinations periodically is an important part of staying healthy. Although mammograms are not always necessary until the age of 40+, it could be beneficial to perform a breast self examination recurrently beginning at an earlier age. As stated above, it is important to catch any medical problem at its earliest stage. Other self examinations include genital and testicular exams as well as looking for changes in your skin which could possibly result in skin cancer.

11. PREGNANT WOMEN

While attending your first prenatal visit, blood tests, urinalysis, blood pressure measurement, and screening for hepatitis B virus and HIV infection are recommended. More tests will be performed throughout the remainder of the pregnancy.



12. TUBERCULIN TEST

This test is run in order to determine whether or not you have been infected by the organisms that cause tuberculosis (TB). This is usually a concern in communities where TB is commonly present. This heightens the risk of coming into contact with TB-causing organisms.

EMERGENCIES AND FIRST AID

When managing emergencies, first determine any danger. Try and protect the injured person or yourself from explosions, fire, or any other immediate hazards. If you think spinal injury could be a possibility, then do not move the person unless there is a threat of immediate danger. If the injured person happens to be unconscious or is not responding, remember the ABC's: Airway, Breathing and Circulation. It is always a good idea to learn CPR in case you find yourself in a situation where the injured person is not breathing.

Analyze the injury. If there are any secondary injuries, prioritize them. The most serious of injuries are not always the most obvious. Firstly, address the most life-threatening problems, such as shock or bleeding. Then check for broken bones and other injuries. If you need emergency assistance, contact 911 or other emergency services.

In the situation of accidental tooth loss, it may be possible for a dentist to reimplant it. If the tooth is only chipped, it can most likely be repaired. If this occurs, call your dentist immediately for an emergency visit. The reimplantation procedure is most successful during the first 30 minutes of tooth loss.

1. BITES AND SCRATCHES

Being bitten or scratched by an animal can bring about the worry of rabies. The most common animal carriers of rabies in Canada and the U.S. are raccoons, bats, skunk and foxes. Domestic pets such as cats, dogs and ferrets have most likely been vaccinated and probably do not carry rabies. However, stray animals usually have not been vaccinated. If you come into contact with the rabies virus, it could be fatal if not treated within 48 hours. Be sure to report any and all wild animal bites or scratches to your doctor or local animal control department. Even if they are not life-threatening, these scratches or bites can cause infection. Bites from humans or cats specifically are prone to bacterial infection. Keep your tetanus shots up to date as all bites or scratches can expose you to the serious infection.



INSECT BITES AND STINGS

Insect bites, spider bites, bee and wasp stings often cause a localized reaction which involves swelling, pain, redness and sometimes itchiness. Some people's bodies will react worse than others, especially a child's. Most often, these bites and stings do not cause reactions all over the body unless there is an allergy. If you are allergic, symptoms may include hives all over the body, tightness in the throat or chest, shortness of breath, dizziness, wheezing or swelling of the tongue and face. If these symptoms develop, seek immediate medical attention.

PREVENTION

- Do not keep wild animals as pets and have all pets vaccinated against the rabies virus.
- Never disturb an animal while it is eating.
- Do not provoke wild animals as their reaction is unpredictable and they may choose to attack.
- Do not handle sick or injured animals.

TREATMENT FROM HOME

- Clean the wound immediately with soap and water.
- If you are injured by a domestic animal, find out whether or not it has been vaccinated.
- Any pet that has attacked a human being should be contained and observed for 10 days by a veterinarian to see if rabies symptoms develop.

WHEN TO CALL A HEALTH PROFESSIONAL

- If the scratch or bite is from a wild animal, human or cat.
- If the animal that caused the injury is foaming at the mouth or attacked for no apparent reason.
- If you are unsure if the animal that attacked you has been vaccinated.
- If you lose function or feeling beneath the wound.
- If stitches may be needed.
- If signs of infection present themselves.



2. BLEEDING UNDER THE NAIL

If the problem is a smashed fingernail or toenail, these problems are not often serious. If bleeding occurs under the nail, the pressure can be quite painful. The only way to stop the pain is to press a hole into the nail to drain the blood. This is only necessary (and helpful) if the pain is very severe and intense. It is often described as feeling pulse under the nail.

3. ABDOMINAL WOUNDS

Blunt blows to the stomach can cause severe bruising due to bleeding under the skin. These bruises are due to internal injury. The injury can cause the abdominal area to become rigid or tender. If this occurs, monitor the victim's pulse, respiration rate and blood pressure, if possible. If the pulse is rapid or weak, or if breathing slows, this could be a sign of internal injury. If this is the case, call 911 or go to the emergency room immediately.

4. HEAD INJURIES

Minor cuts on the head will often bleed excessively due to blood vessels on the scalp being so close to the surface. In children, blood loss from a scalp injury can be enough to cause shock.

Head injuries that have no visible bleeding externally could have caused life-threatening bleeding or swelling inside the skull. The harder the impact of the injury, the more likely it is that damage was caused to the brain. If you or anyone else experiences a head injury they should be monitored for a period of 24 hours.

The signals that are being watched for are:

- Trouble speaking.
- Confusion.
- Numbness or weakness of one side of the body.
- Obstructed or blurred vision.
- Difficulty waking up from sleep.
- Vomiting.
- Seizures and convulsions.

If any of these symptoms occur, call 911 immediately.



5. BURNS

Burns are classified as 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th degree due to their depth, not the severity of the burn. A 1st degree burn means only the outer layer of skin has been affected. A 2nd degree burn means that several layers of skin have been affected. This can cause the skin to become blistered, puffy and swollen. A 3rd degree burn means all layers of skin and perhaps underlying tissue has been affected by the burn. Nerves can be destroyed or damaged and the skin may appear to be charred, or black. 4th degree burns extend through the skin to injure bone and muscle.

If your burn is mild or only a 1st or 2nd degree burn, you may want to treat yourself from home. If the burn is a 3rd or 4th degree burn, call a health professional immediately.

- Make sure the source of the burn is extinguished properly.
- Lay down to prevent shock.
- Cover the burn with a clean sheet.
- Do not apply ice, salve or medicated creams to the burn.
- Run cool tap water over the burn for 15-30 minutes or until the pain subsides.
- Remove any jewelry or clothing from the burned area, as these items may be difficult to remove after the burn has swelled.
- Clean the burn with mild soap and water. You may apply gauze if it is helpful.
- Do not apply salve, butter grease or oil to a burn. It will only increase the risk of infection.
- After 2-3 days apply aloe to the burn.
- If blisters form, do not break them. Keep them clean and cover the area with a sterile dressing.
- Ibuprofen or acetaminophen can be taken to treat the pain. Aspirin is not recommended.



6. HEART ATTACK

A heart attack occurs when blood flow to the heart is blocked. Without blood and the oxygen it carries, part of the heart begins to die. A heart attack isn't always lethal. Fast treatment can restore blood flow to the heart and possibly even save your life. Things like intense exercise, sudden strong emotion, or illegal drug use (such as a stimulant, like cocaine) can trigger a heart attack. But in many cases, there is no clear reason why heart attacks occur when they do.

Symptoms of heart attack often include sweating, shortness of breath, dizziness, or nausea. The pain a heart attack can cause will often go away with rest. People will often mistake a heart attack for another problem such as indigestion, a pulled muscle, or even heartburn. It is important to recognize a heart attack when it occurs and seek emergency care immediately. Once you have done this, chew one adult aspirin (unless you are allergic or unable to), and wait for the ambulance to arrive.

7. HEAT EXHAUSTION

Heat exhaustion is often due to fluids lost by excessive sweating. It is important to drink lots of water to replace these fluids when working or exercising in hot weather. Symptoms can include:

- Excessive sweating.
- Fatigue, weakness, headache, dizziness or nausea.
- Skin that is cool, pale, moist or flushed.

Sometimes, heat exhaustion can lead to something called heatstroke. This will require emergency treatment. Heatstroke occurs when the body fails to regulate its temperature and it continues to rise up to 40°C degrees or higher. The longer a person's body temperature is above 40°C, the greater the likelihood that he/she will suffer permanent effects, or death. While waiting for the ambulance, sponge him/her down with cool water.

If you suffer from an existing medical condition, you need to be especially careful, as you may be more susceptible to the effects of an extreme heat event. For example, if your heart does not work at full capacity, if you use certain medication, or even if you are just dehydrated, you may be at an increased risk.



8. HYPERVENTILATION

Hyperventilation is breathing that is deeper and more rapid than usual. It causes a decrease in the amount of carbon dioxide in the blood. This can make you feel light-headed, short of breath, and have a rapid heartbeat. It also can lead to numbness or tingling in your hands or feet, anxiety, fainting, and sore chest muscles.

Hyperventilation also can occur due to problems caused by asthma, emphysema, or head injury. However, it is most likely to occur in people who are nervous, tense, or breathe shallowly, and have other medical conditions, such as lung disease or a panic disorder. Women experience hyperventilation more often than men. Most people who have problems with hyperventilation are between the ages of 15 and 55. Hyperventilation may occur when people travel to elevations over 2000 m (6000 ft).

- Sit and try to concentrate on slowing your breathing down. It may help to breathe through your nose.
- Practice a relaxation technique that is most effective for you.
- You can try holding a paper bag over your mouth and nose and taking natural, easy breaths in and out. Continue this exercise for 5-15 minutes unless you have heart or lung problems or are at an altitude above 1,800 meters.

9. KIDNEY STONES

A kidney stone can be as tiny as a grain of sand to as big as one inch or larger. Sometimes a stone may leave the kidney and move down a ureter into the bladder. From the bladder, the stone passes through the urethra and out of the body in urine. Passing a kidney stone through a ureter or the urethra might be painless or it might cause severe and intense pain.

Symptoms of a kidney stone include pain in your side, groin or genital area that worsens over a period of 15 minutes to an hour until the pain becomes unbearable. If the stone is not moving or is passed into the bladder, the pain may subside.

A kidney stone may also cause other symptoms, such as blood in the urine, painful urination, or a severe urge to urinate. If you suspect that you are passing a kidney stone, call your doctor or a health professional immediately.



10. POISON OR FOOD POISONING

FOR ANY TYPE OF POISONING: Call 911 or Poison Control immediately.

A child will swallow almost anything, including poisonous substances. If your child has consumed a substance and you are unsure as to whether or not it is poisonous, assume the worst.

Food poisoning is often confused with stomach flu and vice versa. These are two completely different ailments, with similar symptoms. Stomach flu is often caused by a viral infection in the digestive system. Food poisoning is usually caused by bacteria in food that has not been prepared or stored properly. Bacteria may grow when certain foods, such as meats, dairy products and sauces, are not handled correctly or are stored at a temperature between 4-60°C.

If the symptoms you are experiencing are present in others who have consumed the same food, suspect food poisoning. Another sign to look for is if the food you have consumed was unrefrigerated. Symptoms of food poisoning may present themselves anywhere from 1-48 hours after eating. Nausea, diarrhea, and vomiting may last anywhere from 12-48 hours as well.

Botulism is uncommon but a very lethal form of food poisoning. It is often caused from improper home-canning methods for low-acid food products such as corn or beans. Symptoms of botulism include double-vision and difficulty swallowing, or even breathing.

To prevent food poisoning:

- Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold.
- Avoid eating any meats, dairy or vegetables that have been kept at a temperature of 4-60°C for 2 hours or longer.
- Check your refrigerator temperature. It should be between 0-4°C.
- Do not defrost meats in the sink or kitchen counter. Defrost them in the refrigerator or microwave.
- Ensure that you are washing your hands with soap and water before handling and preparing food. Wash your hands after handling raw meats, especially chicken.
- Do not consume raw eggs or uncooked sauces containing raw eggs.
- Discard any cans or jars with bulging lids or leaks.



11. CHOKING

Choking usually occurs when food or an object is lodged in the windpipe. If you are choking, you cannot talk, breathe, cough, and may turn color. The Heimlich Maneuver is designed to dislodge the food or object.

The following is only to be performed on children 1 year or older:

- Stand behind the person and put your arms around their waist. If they are standing, position one of your feet between their legs so that you can support their body if they lose consciousness.
- Make a fist with one hand. Place the thumb side of your fist against the person's abdomen, just above the naval and below the sternum.
- Grasp your fist with the other hand. Give a quick upward thrust into the abdomen to pop the object out. Use less force on a child.
- Repeat the thrusts until the object pops out.
- If you choke while you are alone, do abdominal thrusts on yourself, or lean over the back of a chair and press forcefully to pop the object out.
- If the person loses consciousness while you are performing the Heimlich Maneuver on them, lower them to the ground gently and call 911 for assistance.
- Begin CPR and chest compressions.
- Each time the airway opens during CPR, look for and obstruction in the mouth or throat. If you can, remove it.
- Continue the CPR until the person breathes on their own or an ambulance arrives.