

# Chapter 6

# Signs of Sickness



**In this chapter, you can find information about:**

1. What are signs and symptoms?
2. Understanding levels of urgency/emergency
3. What did I learn?

# 1. What Are Signs and Symptoms?

Signs and symptoms are signals from your body telling you that you are not well or that you are sick.

Signs are visible and can be seen by you or others.

Symptoms can be felt by you and you can describe these feelings to others.

## Signs that we are sick

Some signs are easy to see:

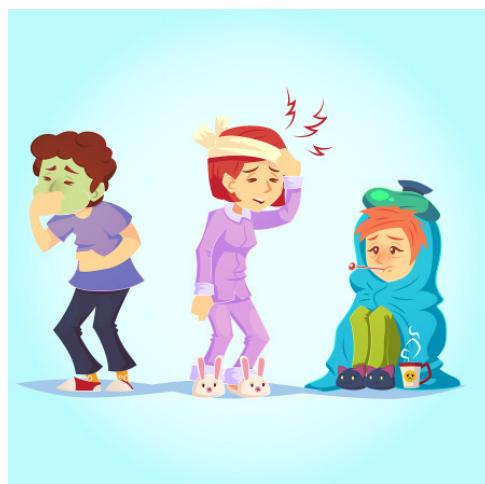
- Bleeding
- Throwing up
- Red spots or rash on your skin
- Changes in pooping and peeing

Some signs are harder to see, but can be felt; and are known as symptoms:

- Toothache
- Stomach pains
- Feelings, like being really sad or confused
- Bad dreams

Some signs and symptoms get better on their own and sometimes you may need to call your doctor.

You may even have to call **9-1-1**.



## 2. Understanding Levels of Urgency/Emergency

The chapter contains stories about people who have signs and symptoms of sickness that they haven't told their doctor about yet. Below, is a guide to help you identify what people should do.



This means they should see their doctor this week.



This means they should see their doctor today.



**This means they need an ambulance now!  
To get an ambulance, call 9-1-1!**

# What's Happening to Ashley?

Ashley's skin is very itchy. She just can't stop scratching it. She even scratches while she sleeps. Her skin is red and sometimes bleeds.



Ashley has a **skin problem**.  
She should go to her doctor this week.

# What's Happening to Rosa?

Rosa likes coffee in the morning.  
But today something has changed for Rosa.  
She can't move her arm, and it is painful.  
She is also having a hard time walking because of pain in her knee.



Rosa might have a **broken bone** in her arm.  
She might have **arthritis** in her knee.  
She should go to her doctor today.

# What's Happening to Nick?

Nick has fallen down.

His whole body is shaking. He can't stop it.

He also can't control his pee.

Soon, he will stop shaking. He will feel very sleepy.

He won't remember what happened.



Nick is having a seizure.

He might have a type of epilepsy.

**Call 9-1-1!**

They will decide if he needs to go to the hospital.

**911**

# What's Happening to Jeff?

Lately, Jeff feels upset a lot.

At work, he just can't stay on track.

He is not taking care of himself as well as usual.

Jeff's coworkers notice he has changed.

What's wrong  
with me?

Jeff's not doing  
work. That's not  
like him.

And he looks  
really sad.



Jeff might need help with his **mental health**.  
He should go to his doctor this week.

# What's Happening to Ray?

On Thursday, Ray gets his new pills.



My friend is really sick.  
He took some new pills.



On Friday, his roommate tries to wake him.  
Ray throws up and is very sleepy.



Ray might be having a **bad reaction to medication**.

**Call 9-1-1!**

They will decide if he needs to go to the hospital.

# What's Happening to Oscar?

Oscar is eating lunch. All of a sudden, he starts to cough.  
Food gets caught in his throat a lot lately.  
Oscar also gets a lot of chest infections.  
These things happen more as he gets older.



Oscar might have **swallowing problems**.  
He should go to his doctor today.

## What's Happening to Joseph?

Joseph is feeling sick after eating.

He has pain in his stomach. He is vomiting.

This happens a lot lately.



It hurts when Joseph tries to poop. This happens a lot lately.

He gets pains in his stomach. Joseph often feels very grumpy.



Joseph is having **gastric problems**.

He should go to his doctor today.

# What's Happening to Mario?

Mario eats a lot of food with fat and sugar. He sits down most of the time.

His sister says he should lose weight, eat more nutritious food, and exercise. Recently, he has been feeling very tired and thirsty, and he is peeing more than usual. He has also noticed numbness and tingling in his hands and feet.

Today, Mario is out shopping.

All of a sudden, he can't stand up.



**911**

Mario might have **diabetes**.

He might also have **heart problems**.

**Call 9-1-1!**

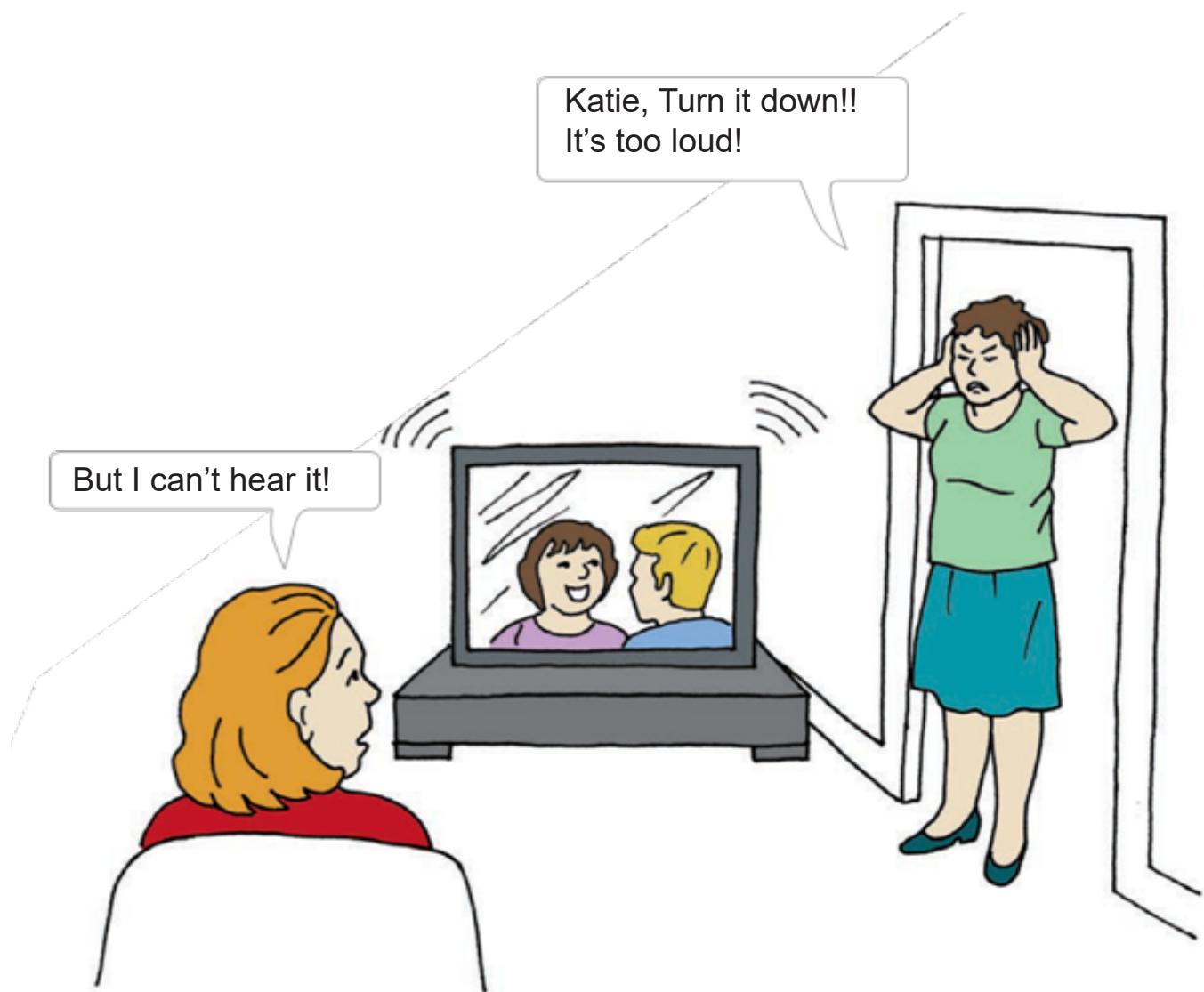
They will decide if he needs to go to the hospital.

# What's Happening to Katie?

Katie is watching TV.

Her mom is irritated with her. She says the TV is too loud. Lots of people say that!

Katie doesn't think it is.



**!** Katie might have **problems with her hearing**. She may also have a **blockage** in her ear canals, which will need to be removed by a doctor or nurse. She should go to her doctor this week.

# What's Happening to Harry?

Harry used to like new places.

Now, he gets worried about tripping over things. He's not sure why he trips over so much.

Today, he is worried about going up the steps.



Harry might have **problems with his eyes**.  
He might not be seeing things very well.  
He should go to his doctor this week.

## What's Happening to Frances?

Frances is eating dinner. She tries to chew some meat. It hurts too much! She can't finish her dinner.



Frances has a **toothache**. She might have a **dental problem or gum disease**. This can cause other health problems, too. She should try to go to her dentist today.

### 3. What Did I Learn?

#### I can take charge of my health care when I:

- Know how to recognize signs and symptoms.
- Know how to identify the urgency of my signs or symptoms of sickness.
- Know what to do in case of an emergency.

#### Notes:

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Oregon Self Advocacy Coalition

