

Empowering Patients: Symptoms and Screening Tests - Dr. Davidicus Wong

The Review of Systems is a system-by-system review of symptoms.

Key questions that may indicate underlying disease. Depending on your response, your doctor will ask further questions and may perform an examination to help determine the cause of your symptoms.

General Symptoms

- Has there been a change in your energy level?
- Have you gained or lost weight?
- Have you had increased hunger or thirst?
- How is your sleep?

Neurological Symptoms

- Are you having headaches? *Progressive symptoms with any changes in behaviour or function require prompt medical attention.*
- Do you have dizziness (lightheadedness or vertigo)? *Persistent vertigo or vertigo associated with other neurological symptoms requires medical attention.*
- Do you have any numbness or altered sensations?
- Have you had memory problems?

Neurological emergencies: a seizure (a temporary loss of consciousness usually associated with involuntary movements) **or a stroke** (Symptoms might include the sudden appearance of neurological symptoms, such as weakness, numbness, loss of speech, loss of vision, severe imbalance or behavioural changes).

Head and Neck Symptoms

- Having you had any hearing loss? Have you had tinnitus (ringing in the ears)?
- Do you have difficulty breathing through your nose? *This may be due to allergies, septal deviation, foreign bodies or tumours.*
- Have you been bothered by nosebleeds?
- Have you had double vision?
 - *A sudden loss of vision is an emergency. It may indicate a stroke or a retinal detachment.*

Musculoskeletal Symptoms

- Have you had swelling or stiffness of any joints?
- Have you had locking or decreased range of motion in any joint?

Cardiovascular Symptoms

- Have you had chest (neck, throat or arm) pain or pressure? Do you get palpitations?
- Do you have pain in your calves when walking? *When relieved by rest, this might indicate poor arterial circulation in your legs.* Do you have painful swelling in one leg? *This may be an infection or a blood clot that requires prompt attention.*
- Do you have shortness of breath with exertion?
 - The classic symptoms of heart failure: shortness of breath with exertion or lying down, swelling of the feet and legs and weight gain due to fluid retention.

Respiratory Symptoms

- Are you having difficulty breathing? Do you wheeze? Have you been coughing? Have you coughed up blood?

Urinary Symptoms

- Do you have difficulty with urination (decreased flow, increased frequency, problems with bladder control or pain)?
- Do you have blood in the urine?

Genital Symptoms

- Have you had pelvic pain? Are periods irregular, heavy or painful? Have you had abnormal vaginal bleeding or spotting?
- Do you have any groin or genital sores, swelling or growths?

Gastrointestinal Symptoms

- Do you have difficulty swallowing? Do you have heartburn? Have you been vomiting? (red blood or coffee grounds?) Have you had increased gas, constipation or diarrhea? Have you had a change in your bowel movements?
- Has there been a change in the caliber of your stools? *Pencil-thin or flattened stools may indicate a colon cancer or an abnormal mass in the abdomen.* Have you seen blood in your stools? *This may appear bright red, but when bleeding from an ulcer is digested it produces melena – black, tarry stools.*

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ALARM SYMPTOMS

These symptoms may indicate serious conditions that require immediate medical attention.

- A. **PAIN** that is unexplained, severe, colicky, electrical or persistent; *chest pain*, especially if it is squeezing or associated with sweating, nausea or spreading to the neck, throat or arm; *bone pain*, especially if it is unremitting and disturbs sleep.
- B. **LOSS OF FUNCTION:** Unexplained changes in your speech, memory, emotions, swallowing, bowel movements, urination, heart rhythm, vision, hearing, balance, coordination, sensation or muscle function.
- C. **CONSTITUTIONAL:** Unexplained sudden or progressive changes in weight, energy, appetite, body temperature, thirst, leg swelling and exercise tolerance.
- D. **GROWTHS:** New or growing lumps felt in the skin, mouth, muscle, breast or scrotum; lymph nodes felt around the neck and under the arms; skin changes, including ugly moles, persistent scabs or sores.
- E. **BLEEDING:** in urine, sputum, stools or vomit; abnormal bruising.

Please share this information with your family, friends and anyone else who may find it helpful.

Together we'll create a healthier community and a healthier future.

The Four Foundations of Self Care

- **What you eat** (What you put into your body).
- **What you do** (physical activity and rest).
- **How you feel** (emotional wellbeing).
- **How you connect** (healthy relationships).

For more on healthy living: divisionsbc.ca/burnaby

For more on achieving your positive potential for health, davidicuswong.wordpress.com

Note: The articles and resources on Dr. Wong's website reflect his own ideas and not necessarily the opinions of the Burnaby Division of Family Practice.