

JUST NOT RIGHT

Sometimes, you do not know what is wrong, but you don't feel right. People around you might notice that you are acting differently or making different sounds. These changes in behavior might help a doctor determine why you do not feel well. This is especially important for people who can not talk or explain what is wrong.



SOME FACTS about "Just Not Right"

- Although "just not right" is not a medical term, it is something we all often experience. Trying to understand what is "not right" can be very helpful in determining what is wrong with a person with mental retardation.
- When a person with mental retardation changes how they behave, it might be a sign that they are not feeling well.
- Many people with mental retardation can not explain how they feel. However, people who see them regularly will notice if something seems wrong and if they are behaving differently. Such changes can be a sign of a medical problem.



CAUSES

While you might not be able to determine the reason the person is not feeling right, it is helpful to think of possible causes.

For example:

- Has there been a death in the family or of a close friend?
- Has there been a change in the daily routine?
- Are there new support-providers or have old ones left?
- Is there a new medication (or a change in dose)?
- Was a medication stopped?
- Is there a new medical condition or illness?
- Is there an injury?
- Is there any suspicion of abuse or neglect?



SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Some questions to consider:

Does the person:

- Seem more or less active than normally?
- Avoid using an arm or leg, that they normally do?
- Sit in a new or funny position?
- Appear to be in pain in certain positions?
- Seem agitated, angry, sad, tired etc...?
- Have changes in facial expression?
- Seem to express pain, fear, anger or tiredness?
- Seem more or less verbal?
- Make different sounds than usual?
- Look ill?
- Have a fever?
- Have abnormality in breathing?

It is also important to note the following changes:

- Changes in the type and amount of food and liquid consumed
- Changes in bowel or bladder movements
- Changes in sleep patterns



PREVENTION

- **Get to know the person** in order to identify changes.
- DETAILED and CAREFUL recording of an individual's behaviors and actions will make it easier to notice if they change. It helps to notice changes quickly.

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WHAT TO DO

- Try to identify what is wrong. It might help to use pictures and have the person point to where it hurts.
- If something seems wrong, don't ignore it: **REPORT IT**. Tell other family members, support-staff, the doctor or nurse.
- RECORD** any noticeable changes.
- The doctor will need to know when the changes began.
- Confer with other caregivers: See if other people have also noticed these changes. If not, let them know what has been observed.
- If abuse or neglect is suspected, report it for investigation



WHAT NOT TO DO

DO NOT ignore these changes in behavior. They might be signs of a condition that requires medical attention!



DOCUMENT

- Keep a detailed log of changes in behavior and share this with the other support providers. It is important to record when these changes began, and what events might have caused them. If the person with mental retardation can not talk, your thoughts are very helpful for the doctor. **If abuse or neglect is suspected: REPORT for investigation**
- File an **Incident Report** (if required) and complete other documentation such as writing down a description in the logbook if the person requires emergency medical care.



CALL THE DOCTOR

Call the doctor if:

- The change in behavior began at the same time as a new medication
- The change in behavior began when a medication was stopped
- This is the first time you have noticed this behavior
- The behavior is **very** differently from normal
- The new behaviors might hurt the person or nearby people
- You suspect abuse or neglect



EMERGENCY

Immediately seek medical care if the person:

- Can't be awakened
- Looks very sick (For example, high fever, difficulty breathing)
- These changes began very quickly



TO LEARN MORE – Go to these websites and look for information about the signs and symptoms of concern:

- <http://www.webmd.com>
- <http://www.allrefer.com>
- <http://www.mayoclinic.com>