

# Knowing Your Health Warning Signs



1 Department of Health



Elderly Health Service

## • Detect Dementia Early •

Dementia is a form of degenerative disease affecting brain cells, causing a decline in cognitive function. It is not a normal part of ageing. Patients will progressively develop signs from memory loss to total loss of self-care ability. Early detection of dementia allows proper diagnosis and treatment of patients, and help to maintain their self-care ability. Family members should look out for any progressive difficulties experienced by the older members of their family in their daily lives (e.g. requiring others' help in daily tasks), as well as any changes in their behaviour or mood. For example:

1. Frequently forgetting to take medicines, attend follow-up, attend appointments or pay the bills
2. Unable to tell if food is cooked before serving
3. Difficulties in simple calculations such as handling payment and change during shopping
4. Putting objects in the wrong places at home
5. Losing their way home in familiar environments
6. Failure to handle complex tasks, such as bank accounts
7. Easily becoming low in mood or anxious
8. Reduced social contacts with family members or friends

Any of the above can be early signs of dementia. Please seek advice early from medical professionals.

## The Health Warning Signs You Need to Know

Elderly people should always be aware of their own body conditions and seek early medical advice in case they notice any abnormal signs or experience discomfort. The doctor will conduct a health assessment and check-up to make an accurate diagnosis. Do not delay or leave it until the next scheduled follow-up date. The following are some common warning signs:

1. Chest pain or tightness (may feel like pressure), numbness or pain over neck and/or shoulder, especially upon exertion or emotional upset. This may be accompanied with sweating, nausea, shortness of breath or dizziness. These can be signals of an impending heart attack and one should seek medical attention at the Accident and Emergency Department immediately
2. Sudden onset of weakness or numbness (even though transient), especially if it affects one side of the body, can be signals of a stroke. One should seek medical attention at the Accident and Emergency Department immediately
3. Persistent cough, increased cough or blood in sputum
4. Lump(s) on the body even if painless
5. Change in bowel habit (such as diarrhoea or constipation for over two weeks), abdominal pain, mucus or blood in stool
6. Post-menopausal vaginal bleeding
7. An obvious change in the appearance of a wart, mole or an unhealing wound or ulcer
8. Unexplained weight loss
9. Persistent low mood (for over two weeks), lost interest in hobbies and activities, or sleep disturbance
10. Difficulty in swallowing

Seek medical attention promptly should any of the above warning signs persists.

**Do not  
ignore  
any early  
health  
warning  
signs in your  
daily life.**

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