

Quick Tips: Appraisal Skills

Appraisal & Care Planning Skills

As a caregiver, daily assessing the condition of your loved one is vital to catching changes quickly and resolving problems before they become serious. The key to good appraisals is to look for any changes in condition. Here are some areas to assess during your daily contact with the individual in your care:

During Individual Bathing

Consider that you may be the only one to see every inch of the person's body. Take time to really check over the total body. Look for the following, and report them immediately to the person's health care provider:

- Any discoloration: bruises, dark spots, or reddened areas.
- Any skin tears, or open areas of any sort (check especially in those hard-to-see areas under the arms, in skin folds, under the breasts, and around the buttocks).
- Any lumps, bumps, or other changes in skin appearance.
- Swelling, dimpling of skin, or any other unusual appearance.

During Individual Bathing

- Check color and quantity of urine and stool. Report changes in normal patterns immediately.
- Check odor. All waste has odors, but unusual or strong odors may indicate in infection, dehydration, or other problem.

During Meal Times

- The person eating much less or much more than usual.
- Swallowing difficulties.
- Changes in food preferences.

At Night

- Changes in amount of sleep time – more or less.
- Changes in sleep patterns – wakefulness at night, late morning awakening, sleep interruptions.

Behavior, look for:

- Changes in communication and eye contact. Notice the individual who stops or reduces talking, or who makes less eye contact than usual. Notice also changes in alertness, in ability to converse clearly.
- Changes in personality, for example, a person who no longer smiles as much, who starts becoming angry easily, who seems “like a different person.”
- Increase in agitation or restlessness.
- Increase in tearfulness, isolation in room, or other signs of despondency.

Remember, the key to assessing is to always be looking for changes. These changes may not, in themselves, signal anything to the person’s health care provider. They may, however, be excellent clues to problems that can be addressed and resolved quickly. Trust your feelings – if a person just isn’t acting “normal” for him, something is probably wrong. Report any changes immediately, and you’ll be the first line of defense in staying on top of all individual problems and concerns