

Table 22-8: Caregiver/Patient Information Sheet: Common Symptoms Requiring Referral to Health Care Provider

<p>Emergency conditions indicating need to contact primary care provider (either home care or hospice nurse or primary clinic) immediately if this change in condition was not anticipated.</p> <p>Depending on the patient's desires, many of these symptoms can be managed comfortably at home.</p> <p>If a family is terribly frightened by these changes, they may choose emergency or 911 assistance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Severe shortness of breath (difficulty talking or walking) with sudden onset • Falling • Seizures • Fainting • Mental status changes, including memory loss and personality changes that are not associated with dying process (Note: increased supervision of client is warranted as soon as a change is noticed) • Difficulty swallowing • Difficulty with urination • Severe or acute new pain • Chest pain • Bleeding (rectum, throat, coughing up blood, blood in urine) (Note: some advanced liver disease conditions can increase risk of bleeding)
<p>Urgent conditions indicating need for prompt reassessment by home-based care, hospice or clinic staff within 24 hours</p> <p>Most of these symptoms can be comfortably managed at home with adjustments to medication or treatment plan.</p> <p>If travel to clinic setting for re-evaluation is without undue strain, patients may desire to go to clinic setting for assessment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diarrhea (five times a day for more than five days) • Persistent headaches not responding to over-the-counter medications • Fever over 101° for more than two days • Dizziness • Uncontrolled chronic pain • Visual changes (including blurred vision, floating spots, loss of sight) • Persistent cough • Nausea and vomiting • Rashes and skin changes
<p>Non-urgent conditions that require follow-up attention by the primary care provider but can wait more than 24 hours (Note: family should call clinic and arrange follow-up appointment within the next two weeks)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncontrolled weight loss is to be anticipated with decreased intake and advanced disease • Persistent insomnia • Any other symptoms distressing to the client