

# Crisis Symptom Reporting Guide



When the Veteran you care for is in a medical crisis, your ability to observe symptoms carefully and report accurately could be lifesaving. During this stressful time, you may find it difficult to think or function as clearly as you normally would. Below is a list that will help you remember what to look for during a crisis. It is a good idea to read this list ahead of time so you have some idea of what to expect, and then tuck a copy in the patient file you created for the Veteran for later reference. (See the **Patient File Checklist** for tips on creating a patient file.)

- What time did the problem start?
- What was the Veteran doing when the problem started?
- Do you know or suspect what might have caused the problem?
- What was the first symptom that you noticed?
- What other symptoms/complaints do you remember?
- Did the symptoms come on abruptly or gradually?
- Was the Veteran given any medication or medical treatment just before the problem started? If so, what was it?
- Did the Veteran say anything about how he or she felt when the problem started and/or as it progressed? What was it?
- Does the Veteran have a history of this kind of problem? If so, what was the previous diagnosis?
- What did you do to try to help the Veteran between the time the problem arose and the time you arrived in the emergency room or the doctor's office?
- Did something work well? Seem to make things worse?

## When to Call for Help

When is a crisis a crisis? When should you call someone else for help? Get help whenever the Veteran is in medical distress and you aren't sure what to do.

## Call your local rapid-response number (e.g., 911) or an ambulance if the Veteran:

- Is unconscious.
- Has unexplained chest pain or pressure.
- Is having trouble breathing or is not breathing at all.
- Has no pulse.
- Is bleeding severely.
- Is vomiting blood or bleeding from the rectum.
- Has fallen and may have broken bones.
- Has had a seizure.
- Has a severe headache and/or slurred speech.
- Has pressure or severe pain in the abdomen that does not go away.
- Is unusually confused or disoriented.

## Also Call for Help If:

- Moving the Veteran could cause further injury.
- The Veteran is too heavy for you to lift or help.
- Traffic or distance would cause a life-threatening delay in getting to the medical center.

Adapted, with permission, from the National Family Caregiver Association resource "Crisis Symptom Reporting Guide."

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