

# STOP AND WATCH

A Guide for Health and Social Care Staff,  
Residents and Relatives

## DETERIORATION?

### RECOGNISE RESPOND COMMUNICATE

Not recognising quickly that someone is becoming unwell can lead to delays in getting help, and possible admission or longer stays in hospital.

This booklet contains easy to use prompt tools to help recognise if someone is becoming unwell and how to call for help.

Authors:

NHS Vale of York CCG Nursing & Quality Team  
and Yorkshire & Humber Improvement Academy

**S**

## Seems different to usual

Often early signs of a problem show when a person is not 'quite right', or acting out of character - like a gut feeling.

**T**

## Talks or communicates less

Whatever the person's usual way of communicating - are they doing this less often or less well?

**O**

## Overall needs more help

More dependent, asking for help more than normal for their usual activities.

**P**

## Pain new or worsening

Pain is often a symptom of something not being right - is the pain new to them or worse than normal?

**A**

## Ate less

You may notice the person's normal eating pattern has altered - eating less, avoiding certain foods.

**N**

## No bowel movement in 3 days: or diarrhoea

Monitoring of bowels is an important indicator of someone being unwell.

**D**

## Drank less

Signs of dehydration include dry skin, dry mouth/tongue, worsening/new confusion.

Care staff have had additional training and are already using the **STOP and WATCH** and **SBAR** to:

**RECOGNISE** ● **RESPOND** ● **COMMUNICATE**

You can use these tools to help staff notice if someone is becoming more unwell.

**W**

## Weight change

Has the person lost/gained weight? You may notice other signs like poorly fitting clothes, jewellery, drawn face, swollen limbs.

**A**

## Agitated or more nervous than usual

You may notice the person fidgeting, trying to get out of their chair/bed, looking scared or worried.

**T**

## Tired, weak, confused, drowsy

You may notice the person appears to have less energy, is confused (more than normal).

**C**

## Change in skin colour or condition

Dry skin is a sign of dehydration. Other changes may be increasing bronzing of the skin (problem with iron), a yellowing of the skin and whites of eyes. A rash that does not respond to treatment, and is accompanied by other symptoms - such as fever, joint pain and muscle aches could be a sign of infection.

**H**

## Help with walking, transferring or toileting more than usual

It may be a sign of acute illness such as a UTI (Urinary Tract Infection), dehydration, malnutrition or chest infection.

## SBAR

- Situation:** Who are you calling about? How long have you been concerned and why?
- Background:** Important medical history (e.g. heart failure, diabetes). Do they have a DNA CPR or Advanced Care Plan?
- Assessment:** Identify changes from Stop and Watch tool.
- Recommendation:** What should you like the responder to do? Are there any other actions you should take?

If you are living in a care home or receiving domiciliary (home) care or are a friend or relative of someone who is, you may see the care staff using the **STOP and WATCH** and **SBAR** tools. These tools are aids to help the care staff clearly recognise if someone is becoming more unwell and how to get the right help at the right time.

The care staff may have the tool on their phone or mobile device or as a paper document.

The care staff will work through the prompts in a structured logical way to help assess the persons condition, they may need to ask questions along with watching how the person is.

Once they have completed the **STOP and WATCH**, they will use this information and ask for help. This could be the senior carer or home manager or a senior office based team member (for domiciliary care). They will use a format called the **SBAR**.

They will also use the information to pass on to other health and care colleagues including the GP, District Nurse, Urgent Care Practitioner or Ambulance staff.

You can use the tools yourself to help identify if you or your friend/relative is becoming unwell.

The **STOP and WATCH** tool is used when a person is *'not their usual self'* and helps care staff to recognise and respond to people becoming unwell.