



Potential Aspiration Management: Essential Monitoring After a Potential Aspiration Incident

BQIS Fact Sheets provide a general overview on topics important to supporting an individual's health and safety and to improving their quality of life. This document provides general information on the topic and is not intended to replace team assessment, decision-making, or medical advice. This Fact Sheet is one of ten regarding aspiration prevention.

A possible aspiration (the entry of material such as throat secretions, food or drink, or stomach contents into the respiratory tract, i.e. windpipe—to the lungs) event could include, but is not limited to:

- Vomiting episode when sleeping or if the individual is unable to move themselves into side-lying or forward to prevent inhaling vomitus
- Choking episode (airway was blocked)
- Coughing with struggle (red face, watery eyes, runny nose)
- Runny nose occurring during eating

Aspiration does not always present itself immediately following a choking incident, even on X-rays. The food or fluid that gets aspirated may get into the lungs, and over a few days may cause an infection. If an infection develops, signs and symptoms will appear in a few days.

If an individual has had a potential aspiration incident, it is important to monitor the individual for the following signs and symptoms of aspiration **for at least seven (7) days** and document findings in the medical record:

- Decreased food and/or fluid intake
- Refusal of meals or fluids
- Temperature elevation (check twice per day; be sure you know what is not OK for the individual)
- Changes in respiratory rate, pulse, or blood pressure (take twice per day; be sure you know what is not OK for the individual)
- Difficulty breathing
- Change in general mood (e.g., more agitated or, conversely, more lethargic or listless; feeling tired or lacking energy)



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- Skin color change (pale/gray/blue), especially in extremities, lips, or fingernails
- Cough
- Chest congestion
- Change in sleeping habits—more or less than before the potential incident

Report any of these signs and symptoms to the person who makes health care decisions for the person and seek medical attention right away!

References

Swaminathan, A. (2015). Presentation of Aspiration Pneumonia. Retrieved 06/19/15 from <http://emedicine.medscape.com/article/296198-overview#a5>.

Galanes, S. Risk for Aspiration. Retrieved 06/19/15 from <http://www1.us.elsevierhealth.com/MERLIN/Gulanick/archive/Constructor/gulanick05.html>.

Related Resources

Aspiration Prevention Series Fact Sheets: *Food Texture and Fluid Consistency Modification, Management of Oral Health, Dysphagia, Modified Barium Swallow Study/Videofluoroscopy, Management of Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD), Positioning, Management of Gastric Residuals, Feeding Tubes and Feeding/Medication Administration Options, and Choice Considerations Relevant to the Use of Enteral Nutrition*

General Description of Diet Textures Handout

These resources can be located on the BQIS Fact Sheet & Reminders webpage at:
<http://www.in.gov/fssa/ddrs/3948.htm>.