

CACHE Level 2

Certificate in Common Health Conditions

SENSORY LOSS

ARTHRITIS

OBSERVATIONS AND REPORTING

MONITORING

STROKE AWARENESS

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Workbook 1

Section 1: Understand how to contribute to monitoring the health of individuals affected by health conditions

This section will help you to understand how you can contribute to monitoring the health of individuals affected by health conditions and why it is important to monitor their health. You will also find out about recording and reporting results of monitoring and the appropriate responses to changes in the individual's condition.

The importance of monitoring the health of individuals with health conditions

Please read the following as it will help you to answer question 1.

Doctors use a variety of tests to check whether an individual is physically well or not. They can take measurements of temperature, blood pressure and pulse and carry out tests on blood and urine, for example. All these things can indicate whether an individual has any kind of physical illness or health problem. Measurements such as temperature and pulse, for example, have a 'normal' range and when the measurements for an individual fall outside this range, it is an indication that something may be wrong.

Health does not just cover physical health but also psychological (or mental health), and this may involve looking for changes in behaviour and mood, for example.

Monitoring someone with a known health condition is important because it can indicate changes in their condition, such as:

- Whether medication is adequately controlling the condition or needs to be increased, reduced or changed.
- Whether the condition has changed and the individual is in worse or better health than previously.
- Health emergencies where the individual may need medication or hospital treatment quickly.
- Whether additional health problems are occurring that may need treatment.



Did you know?

Care workers play an important role in monitoring the health of individuals.

Section 1: Understand how to contribute to monitoring the health of individuals affected by health conditions

The measurements and observations help medical staff to understand the individual's health condition and how it needs to be managed. Many of these important measurements and observations can be done every day by a carer to be passed on to medical experts.

Ways to monitor the health of individuals

Please read the following as it will help you to answer question 2.

There are a variety of ways that health can be monitored but they fall into three main categories:

- **Informal observations** – include watching for changes in behaviour or mood that might indicate psychological health conditions. Crying easily and losing interest easily can indicate depression, for example. These observations are important to make on anyone with a health condition, whether it is physical or psychological. Changes in physical health and long-term physical health conditions can have an impact on psychological health as well as mental illness. Observations can also pick up physical symptoms such as rashes, soreness and changes in appearance such as skin colour, urine colour and smell, etc. which can be a sign of illness.
- **Physical measurements** – these include taking measurements such as pulse, blood pressure, peak air flow, weight and temperature. Measurement might also look at food and fluid intake of individuals to ensure they are getting sufficient nutrition and hydration.
- **Testing** – actual tests of blood, urine, etc. will be carried out by medical professionals, so – as a carer or care worker – you are unlikely to be involved in these.

Knowledge Activity 1: List all the different sorts of observations (things you might look out for) and measurements you might carry out to monitor the health of someone in your care. Or research the sorts of observations and measurements that are carried out using the Internet or by asking people you know.



Section 1: Understand how to contribute to monitoring the health of individuals affected by health conditions

Monitoring an individual

Please read the following as it will help you to answer question 3.

The monitoring that will be carried out for a particular individual will depend on the particular health condition they have. Here are some examples:

- **Asthma** – you might measure peak flow using a peak flow meter and informally observe breathing and breathlessness in the individual.
- **High blood pressure** – measurements of blood pressure may be made using a blood pressure monitor and observations to check for symptoms of stroke, heart attack or kidney problems which are just some of the complications that can arise from high blood pressure.
- **Dementia** – observations may include observing individuals carrying out everyday tasks to see whether their cognitive function has become worse, listening for declining ability in verbal communication and watching for signs of depression which is common, particularly in the early stages of dementia.

Knowledge Activity 2: Based on an individual with a health condition:

- Briefly describe their health condition(s).
- Explain what observations are being or should be carried out.



Blank lined area for writing answers to Knowledge Activity 2.



Section 1: Understand how to contribute to monitoring the health of individuals affected by health conditions

Carrying out observations and measurements

Please read the following as it will help you to answer question 4.

When carrying out any monitoring, it is important to:

- respect the dignity and privacy of the individual
- reassure the individual and reduce any fears or concerns
- follow agreed ways of working



Dignity and privacy

Every individual has the right to dignity and privacy. Often, when individuals have health conditions, they need help with activities and tasks they cannot manage themselves and they can feel a loss of dignity and privacy when this happens.

One of these activities is the area of health monitoring. When monitoring the health of an individual it is important to respect their dignity and privacy. You can do this by ensuring that any health monitoring is done in a private room with the individual so that they do not feel they are being watched by others. If any observations or measurements involve them removing clothing, ensure that doors and curtains are closed so they do not feel exposed.

Always check that the individual is happy with what you are doing and carefully explain the procedure and why it needs to be carried out. This helps to respect their dignity. Remember that the individual has choices and may choose for you not to carry out the observation or measurement. If they do this, you need to respect their wishes.

Reassurance

Measurements and observations can be worrying for the individual. This may be because:

- they are worried about the measurement or observation procedure itself
- they are worried about the implications for their health condition

Section 1: Understand how to contribute to monitoring the health of individuals affected by health conditions

When taking measurements or making observations, it is important to reassure the individual so that you reduce these fears and concerns. You can do this by:

- Explaining exactly what you are going to do and why so the individual knows what to expect and that it is routine monitoring, or to check on a specific symptom or condition.
- Make it clear that monitoring by observing and measuring is a way to support their health condition and check everything is ok and the measuring and observing helps to ensure their health is maintained and/or improved.
- Talk to them about any concerns they have and – where you cannot answer them yourself – ask a health or medical professional to speak with them.
- Talk to them as you carry out any observations, explaining what you are doing at each stage.

Agreed ways of working

Agreed ways of working are the policies and procedures that are in place within the organisation for which you work. These policies and procedures will have been designed to follow best practice as well as taking account of the law and any regulations or codes of practice that cover a particular area. By following the agreed ways of working, you can be sure that you are carrying out tasks correctly so it is important to follow them. To follow agreed ways of working you need to make sure that you keep up to date with policies and procedures in the organisation and that you understand how they affect your area of work.

Knowledge Activity 3: Choose two observations or measurements that you regularly carry out and explain the agreed ways of working, as set out by your organisation. If you are not in a work role, then choose two observations or measurements and research policies and procedures in an organisation you know or on the internet.



Section 1: Understand how to contribute to monitoring the health of individuals affected by health conditions

Recording observations

Please read the following as it will help you to answer question 5.

How you record observations will depend on what it is you need to measure or observe and record. Here we will look at some general rules about recording observations and some common recording methods used in care situations.

It is important to record observations and measurements so that you can see what is happening in relation to the health of an individual over time. It is only by recording observations over time that you will be able to identify changes in their condition that may need to be addressed.

Recordings of any observations must be:

- **Relevant** – you should only record information that is relevant to the individual's condition and general health. Extra information will just fill up the records and make it more difficult to identify patterns. This doesn't mean that if you are concerned about something that you haven't been asked to report on, that you shouldn't report it. Any change in the health of the individual will be relevant whether you are measuring it on a regular basis or not. For example, an individual may develop a sore or rash; you may just be recording their blood pressure and temperature but the development of the rash or sore is also relevant to their condition and should be recorded and reported.
- **Accurate** – it is important that any measurements, readings and observations are accurate. If you carry out a measurement of, for example, temperature, pulse or blood pressure and are not sure of its accuracy, then don't be afraid to repeat the test. If you are writing notes about an individual's health condition, make sure what you write down describes the situation accurately. An incorrect reading or observation could lead to incorrect treatment.
- **Complete** – any recording of information about an individual's health condition needs to be complete. If you are asked, for example, to record temperature, pulse rate and respiration – a common combination of recordings in care homes – you need to make sure you record all of these. Recording pulse rate or temperature only, for example, would not give a full picture of the individual's health.
- **Clear** – any recording you do must be clear and easy for others to read. Figures and words should be written clearly. A '5' that could be mistaken for a '3' or an '8' could make all the difference to decisions about an individual's condition and treatment.



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