

Behavioral Manifestations of Physical Illness in people with IDD

1. GI Distress/Reflux

Hand mouthing, pica, food refusal, coughing when lying down, physical or verbal aggression particularly around meal times

2. Earache, headache, sinusitis or other head issue

Head banging, head butting, hitting or slapping self, inserting objects into ear or nose, crying, withdrawal from areas with light or noise, sitting with head in lap, “refusals” to listen or respond (loss or reduction in hearing), hands over ears or face, head tilting

3. Dental issues

Hitting self, hands in mouth, refusal to eat, spitting out food, physical or verbal aggression particularly around meal times

4. Constipation

Guarding abdomen, rocking, not able to sit still (up and down), hitting self in abdomen, fetal position when lying, knees drawn up to when chest sitting, physical or verbal aggression without definite antecedent, refusal to eat

5. Seizure disorder

Disrobing, increased agitation, failure to “pay attention” in children or “daydreaming”, sexually acting out, physical or verbal aggression with no antecedent, repetitive or ritualistic type behaviors that are short lived, rapid eye blinking, tantrums, falls, sudden “sleep”, random talking, hard to “reach”

6. UTI

New onset urinary incontinence, agitation, not able to sit still (up and down), repetitive trips to toilet, screaming when approaching toilet or with

incontinence, grabbing genitals or rubbing with objects, hands in pants, physical or verbal aggression with no antecedent, abdominal guarding, rocking, change in cognitive status, fatigue

7. Pneumonia

Fatigue, withdrawal, refusal to eat, falls, increased irritability, change in cognitive status, refusal to lie down to sleep

8. Sexual abuse

New onset urinary or fecal incontinence, withdrawal, excessive masturbation, refusal to allow bathing or aggression during bathing, self restraint (wrapping self inside shirt, wrapping blanket or throw tightly around themselves, knees to chest and hugging), sexual aggression toward others, agitation, verbal or physical aggression when approached by caregiver or others - especially if the person shares characteristics with abuser (male, female, tall, short hair, Caucasian, African American), suicidal behavior/attempts, night terrors

9. Medication side effects

Blinking, medication refusal, refusal to eat, urinary or fecal incontinence, constipation, urinary retention, aggression, fatigue, weight gain or loss, agitation, scratching self, falls, change in cognitive status, tics, dystonia symptoms, muscle twitching

10. Chest Pain

Scratching, hitting or rubbing chest, crying, yelling out, agitation, anxiety, shortness of breath, weakness