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MEDICINENET GUIDE

POPULAR SYMPTOMS

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WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A SYMPTOM AND A SIGN?

Medical Author: William C. Shiel Jr., MD, FACP, FACR

A symptom is any subjective evidence of disease, while a sign is any objective evidence of disease. Therefore, a symptom is a phenomenon that is experienced by the individual affected by the disease, while a sign is a phenomenon that can be detected by someone other than the individual affected by the disease. For examples, anxiety, pain, and fatigue are all symptoms. In contrast, a bloody nose is a sign of injured blood vessels in the nose that can be detected by a doctor, a nurse, or another observer.

Health care professionals use symptoms and signs as clues that can help to determine the most likely diagnosis when illness is present. Symptoms and signs are also used to compose a listing of the possible diagnoses. This listing is referred to as the differential diagnosis. The differential diagnosis is the basis from which initial tests are ordered to narrow the possible diagnostic options and choose initial treatments.

http://www.medicinenet.com/symptoms_and_signs/article.htm

POPULAR SYMPTOMS BY CONDITION (WITH LINK TO MEDICINENET)

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Swollen Ankles and/or Swollen Feet Symptoms

Medical Author: Melissa Conrad Stöppler, MD

Swelling of the feet and ankles can occur as a result of conditions involving the local extremities as well as systemic conditions (diseases and conditions that affect the entire body). Localized processes such as injuries and infections may lead to a swollen foot and/or ankle only on the involved side. Swelling of the ankle on one side is often a result of sprains or strains. Sometimes diseases that affect the entire body, such as heart disease and kidney or liver failure, can result in excess fluid buildup (edema) that is often concentrated in the legs and feet, leading to swelling not only of the ankles but also of the feet and lower legs. This can also occur with obstruction of the venous system, as may occur with pregnancy and obesity. Diseases of the joints, such as arthritis, can also affect the joints of the ankle and foot, leading to swelling of the involved areas. Treatments for swollen ankles and swollen feet depend on the particular cause, but anti-inflammatory medications are often used to manage the pain associated with strains and sprains.

For additional symptoms and signs, please visit our Symptom Checker index.

REFERENCE:
See: http://www.medicinenet.com/swollen_ankles_andor_swollen_feet/symptoms.htm

Bumps on Skin Symptoms

Medical Author: Melissa Conrad Stöppler, MD

People often describe localized swollen areas on, or under, the skin as lumps or bumps. While bumps on, or under, the skin may result from conditions that give rise to a skin rash, many other conditions can result in solitary raised lumps on the skin. Infections, tumors, and the body’s response to trauma or injury can all lead to lumps or bumps that appear to be located on or underneath the skin.

Depending upon the cause of skin lumps or bumps, they may vary in size and be firm or soft to the touch. The overlying skin may be reddened or ulcerated. Skin bumps may or may not be painful or tender, depending upon the cause of the lesions.

For additional symptoms and signs, please visit our Symptom Checker index.

REFERENCE:
See: http://www.medicinenet.com/bumps_on_skin/symptoms.htm
**Urine Odor Symptoms**

Medical Author: Melissa Conrad Stöppler, MD

Normal urine is clear and has a straw-yellow color. While the odor of urine can vary somewhat, in most cases, it does not have a strong smell. With dehydration, the urine is more concentrated and may have a stronger ammonia scent than normal. Consumption of certain foods, such as asparagus (which can impart a characteristic odor to urine), and taking some medications may alter the odor of urine. When there is an infection in the urinary tract, the urine may take on a foul-smelling odor as well as appear cloudy or bloody. The urine may also have an abnormally sweet odor in uncontrolled diabetes, and some rare genetic conditions can also cause the urine to have an abnormal odor.

For additional symptoms and signs, please visit our [Symptom Checker](http://www.medicinenet.com/urine_odor/symptoms.htm) index.

REFERENCE:


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**Leg Pain Symptoms**

Medical Author: Melissa Conrad Stöppler, MD

Pain in the legs can occur as a result of conditions that affect bones, joints, muscles, tendons, ligaments, blood vessels, nerves, and skin. Typically, the pain is a result of tissue inflammation that is caused by injury or disease. Either injury or chronic disease can cause inflammation to any of the tissues of the leg and lead to leg pain. Since the leg contains a number of different structures and tissue types, a wide variety of conditions and injuries can cause leg pain. For diagnostic and therapeutic purposes, it is important to differentiate the exact type and location of any pain in the legs.

For additional symptoms and signs, please visit our [Symptom Checker](http://www.medicinenet.com/leg_pain/symptoms.htm) index.

REFERENCE:


Shortness of Breath Symptoms
Medical Author: William C. Shiel Jr., MD, FACP, FACR

Shortness of breath has many causes affecting either the breathing passages and lungs or the heart or blood vessels. However, the causes fall into simple categories that we have listed for you below. Shortness of breath is also referred to as dyspnea. Doctors will further classify dyspnea as either occurring at rest or being associated with activity or exercise. They will also want to know if the dyspnea occurs gradually or all of a sudden. Each of these symptoms help to detect the precise cause of the shortness of breath.

An average 150 pound (70 kilogram) adult will breath at an average rate of 14 breaths per minute at rest. Excessively rapid breathing is referred to as hyperventilation.

For additional symptoms and signs, please visit our Symptom Checker index.

REFERENCE:
