

1. Be aware of diagnostic overshadowing

- People with a disability may respond or communicate their symptoms differently.
- Take care not to attribute potential symptoms to disability.
- The presentation of COVID may vary from the general population

2. Ask for and read Hospital Passports

- Read this for essential information. A Hospital Passport gives information about the person's health / medical needs, preferred method of communication and other preferences.
- Ask the person and/or their accompanying carer/ family member if they have one

3. Listen to parents/carers/ family member

- They know the person best and will advise about their normal baseline presentation and how to best support them.
- They know their current behaviour and how it may differ from usual as an indication that they are unwell and also indicate that they are improving.

4. Make reasonable adjustments

- These are adjustments that aim to remove barriers and should be made to support and enable a person receive the treatment they need, e.g. providing a quiet place away from noise, a larger room with a hoist for person with a power wheelchair, access to sign language for people with a hearing impairment.
- You can ask the person and their carer/family member what may have worked before.

5. Communication

- Try to understand the person -check with them, their carer/family and their Health Passport for the best way to achieve this.
- They may have a Communication Passport / Systems or communication board– Use it if they have.
- Use plain simple language. Speak slower. Give plenty of time for understanding and response. Avoid medical terms and jargon wherever possible.

6. Understanding behavioural responses to illness/pain/discomfort

- Articulation of pain might differ from the general population.
- Understanding what is “normal” for that person is crucial to assessment and diagnosis.
- Speak to their carer/family member about this

7. Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act/ National Consent Policy

- Everyone is assumed to have capacity to make decisions. Please make adjustments to enable decision making wherever possible.

8. Ask for specialist support and advice if necessary

- Family/Carers, ID Nurses, Patient Advocate (e.g. National Advocacy Service, Inclusion Ireland) can help with issues of communication, reasonable adjustments, assessment of pain.
- Is the patient linked with an ID service? They maybe able to give expertise in the area.

9. Mental well-being and emotional distress

- Change in routine can be distressing for the person's emotional and mental wellbeing. Change in carers, hospital settings, PPE can all lead do more anxiety and distress.
- Do your best to work with the person to find out how to best help them regain calm and control.www.yourmentalhealth.ie