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| COMMON HEALTH CONDITIONS, DISEASES AND CHANGES TO LOOK OUT FOR | |
| SENSORY | Common eye problems include cataracts, glaucoma, and macular degeneration. Changes to vision including difficulty seeing in low light.  Difficulty hearing higher pitched voices and sounds and hearing in busy places.  Accumulation of ear wax  Changes in taste and smell |
| DIGESTIVE SYSTEM | Digestion of food is more difficult, swallowing and digestive reflexes slow down so swallowing may therefore become difficult. Problems with reflux. Constipation. |
| KIDNEYS, URINARY TRACT | Kidneys become less efficient. Diabetes and high blood pressure can cause damage to kidneys. Greater risk of kidney failure among people with learning disabilities.  Urinary incontinence can be a symptom of hormone levels in women and enlarged prostate in men. |
| WEIGHT | Lower levels of physical activity and a slowing metabolism may contribute to weight gain.  Weight loss may occur as a result of swallowing difficulties or a loss of appetite. This may be an indication of an underlying illness such as cancer. Greater risk of obesity among people with learning disabilities. |
| POSTURE AND MOVEMENT | Bones shrink in size and density and are more prone to fractures and osteoporosis. Muscles, tendons and joints may lose strength and flexibility. Poorer balance leading to an increased risk of falls. |
| HAIR, SKIN AND NAILS | Skin becomes drier and more brittle. Lower level of sweating results in greater susceptibility to heat stroke and exhaustion. Hair and nails grow slower and become brittle needing a higher level of attention. |
| HEART, LUNGS AND RESPIRATORY SYSTEM | High blood pressure (hypertension) – swollen ankles can be sym ptom. Atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries)  Greater risk of heart disease, hypertension, stroke and respiratory diseases (such as Pneumonia). Aspiration pneumonia as a result of matter from the stomach or mouth getting into the lungs. |
| BRAIN AND NERVOUS SYSTEM | Brain cells decrease leading to memory loss. Can also lead to reflexes slowing down, co-ordination difficulties and being more easily distracted. There is a greater risk of Dementia among people with Learning Disabilities. |
| MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING | Changes in sleep patterns. Sleep problems can be an indication of poor health or chronic health problems.  Increase in anxiety and depression. |
| SEPSIS | Although Sepsis is rare, it’s important to have an awareness of it as signs are often missed, yet the infection needs to be treated urgently. It can quickly lead to severe sepsis or septic shock which, in turn, can cause organ failure or death. The person may not have a temperature or high fever but just feel very unwell. People with learning disabilities may have a number of pre-conditions that out them at greater risk of sepsis. |
| THYROID DISEASE | The incidence of thyroid problems increases with age but is sometimes difficult to diagnose as there may be a reduced number of symptoms or they may not be as obvious as those in younger people.  Hypothyroidism (underactive thyroid) is the most common thyroid condition in people over 60 years of age; symptoms such as confusion, memory loss, depression, falling, heart failure and constipation are frequently missed as they are also signs of common illness in older people |

Christine Towers – Supporting People with Intellectual Disabilities to have a good life as they grow older 2019