

**THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SIGN AND SYMPTOM**

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*Understanding the difference between signs and symptoms is fundamental in clinical medicine. Signs are objective indicators detected through examination or instruments, while symptoms are subjective feelings reported by patients. This paper highlights definitions, clinical examples, diagnostic importance, and practical applications of signs and symptoms in medical practice.*

### **Introduction**

In medical science, signs and symptoms are key factors in diagnosing diseases. Although they are often used interchangeably by non-medical individuals, professionals must distinguish between them for accurate clinical decision-making.

#### **Definition of sign and symptom**

• **Sign** — An objective, observable, and measurable clinical finding noted by a healthcare provider.

Examples: Fever, rash, abnormal heartbeat, high blood pressure.

• **Symptom** — A subjective experience described by the patient.

Examples: Pain, dizziness, nausea, fatigue.

### Clinical importance

Understanding both signs and symptoms ensures early detection of illnesses, guides diagnosis, and assists in treatment planning. Signs can be measured scientifically, while symptoms give insight into the patient's internal experience.

### Diagnostic application

Doctors follow a structured diagnostic approach:

1. Patient history — subjective symptoms
2. Physical examination — objective signs
3. Diagnostic tests — laboratory and imaging confirmations

Using both allows a full clinical picture.

### Clinical examples

- Diabetes mellitus:

Symptom — Frequent urination, fatigue

Sign — Elevated blood glucose

- Pneumonia:

Symptom — Chest pain, cough

Sign — Crackles heard in lungs, fever

- Migraine:

Symptom — Headache, sensitivity to light

Sign — Often no measurable sign, diagnosis based on symptoms

### Comparison table

Feature | Sign | Symptom

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Type | Objective | Subjective

Observed by | Doctor | Patient

Measurable | Yes | No

Examples | Fever, rash | Pain, nausea

### Conclusion

Both signs and symptoms are essential components of medical practice. Knowing their differences improves diagnostic accuracy and patient care, forming the foundation of clinical evaluation.

**References**

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