



10 Signs A Senior May Need Assistance with Daily Living

By Emma R. Dickison • March 23, 2010

Thanks in part to medical breakthroughs, Americans are living longer today than ever before. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, people age 65 and older will represent over 18 percent of the population by the year 2030—nearly double that of today. And while a longer life expectancy is certainly something to celebrate, it is not without its challenges. According to the Alliance for Health Reform, 20 percent of seniors are living with 5 or more chronic conditions, seeing an average of 14 different physicians and using about 50 prescriptions every year.

As a result of aging, many seniors will eventually require some level of care and assistance with daily living, but they will find it difficult to ask for help. People value their independence and privacy, and they do not want to be a burden on their family and friends.

If you are concerned your loved one may be struggling unnecessarily, it is better to be proactive and ease into a transition of lifestyle. The following is a list of indicators to help family members and friends quickly assess a loved one's condition, identify potential areas of concern and make important caregiving decisions:

1. **Medical Condition.** A recently diagnose disease, illness or injury could affect your loved one's ability to function on a daily basis.
2. **Driving.** If your loved one's vision, hearing and/or reflexes are impaired, this may increase their risk for being involved in a car accident.
3. **Food/Nutrition.** Take note of your loved one's diet to ensure they are eating well-balanced meals and maintaining a steady weight. Is the food in the refrigerator within its expiration dates?
4. **Hygiene.** Take note of your loved one's overall appearance, smell and ability to wear suitable clothing for the weather. Are the bed linens, bath towels and laundry clean?
5. **Behavior.** Is your loved one anxious, irritable or depressed? Do they have difficulty remembering names, places and current events?
6. **Daily Tasks.** Are basic tasks, such as going grocery shopping and preparing meals, becoming overly challenging or time-consuming for your loved one?
7. **Medication.** Is your loved one able to manage his or her medications properly including dosage, frequency and changes to prescriptions? Are prescriptions being refilled in a timely fashion?
8. **Finances.** Is your loved one able to manage his or her personal finances, pay bills and balance the checkbook?
9. **Mail.** Is the mail stacking up? Do you see past due or delinquency notices?
10. **Safety.** Does your loved one remember to turn off appliances and extinguish candles or cigarettes? Does he or she keep the doors and windows locked?

If you have any concerns, even with one issue, it may be time to take a more active role in your loved one's life. Trust your instincts. Begin by sharing your concerns with your loved in a respectful, non-threatening manner. Let them know your intent is to understand and respect his or her wishes while ensuring safety and comfort. Then, explore your options.

Often there are simple things you can do to provide assistance with daily living. You may consider hiring a home care agency, such as Home Helpers, to provide assistance with daily activities a few days a week.

Choose an agency that offers care plans customized to your loved one's needs. Make certain the home care agency meets all state standards and that its caregivers are employees, not subcontractors, who have been thoroughly screened and appropriately trained and insured.

If your loved one requires more assistance, it may be beneficial to explore independent and assisted living communities, as well as skilled nursing facilities. As you deem it appropriate, seek advice from a health care professional. To help you and your family to feel more comfortable and confident in your caregiving decisions, I suggest joining a community support group and networking with other families who are dealing with similar issues.

Additional Resources

The Society of Certified Senior Advisors at www.csa.us.

Home Helpers at www.HomeHelpers.CC

Direct Link at www.DirectLink911.com