

10 Signs Your Older Parent Needs Help



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Older adults, particularly those living alone, are vulnerable to change. Shifts in physical, mental, and sensory capabilities can indicate it's time for help. But how can you know if your loved one's needs have changed?

Here are some warning signs that a specialized assessment may be needed:

1. Mail and bills are piling up: A once-organized older adult now finds the task of opening, sorting, and prioritizing mail overwhelming. Also, excessive involvement with junk mail can indicate difficulty with comprehension.

2. Housekeeping change: A formerly tidy home now appears cluttered and dirty. Also, a refusal to discard trash can be a sign of behavioral change.

3. Refrigerator change: Either less food or spoiled food with passed expiration dates can signal a problem. When shopping, cooking, and eating become erratic, it's time to intervene. Weight loss can also

mean someone is forgetting to eat, skipping meals, or relying on low-nutrition snacks.

4. Scorched pots and pans: Those with short-term memory issues may forget about food on the stove, creating a fire hazard for themselves and their neighbors.

5. Personal hygiene lapses: When someone wears the same clothes repeatedly, it could be a sign that bathing or doing laundry have become difficult. This may stem from a fear of falling or tripping in the tub or difficulty reaching a washing machine in a basement.

6. Missed doctor appointments: This may be due to memory loss, transportation issues, or even avoidance.

7. Repeated phone calls, especially at unusual hours: This may be a cry for help or a sign of depression or isolation. Also, repetition of the same conversation may signal a short-term memory loss.

8. Forgetting medications or medication errors: This is not a quality-of-life problem; it is a potentially life-threatening one.

9. Inappropriate clothing, behavior, or speech: All of these can be problematic signs. You may notice a loved one is wearing thick woolen sweaters in the summer or has no verbal filter. You also may hear of erratic behavior from neighbors or friends.

10. Symptoms of depression: Signs of depression in older adults include hopelessness, despair, and crying spells. Maybe a loved one has lost interest in once pleasurable activities or perhaps his or her sleeping or eating patterns have changed. These are all cues that an assessment is needed.



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