

When to Get Help

SIGNS THAT ASSISTANCE AT HOME COULD HELP YOU OR A LOVED ONE

Determining exactly when loved ones need help at home can be challenging but the answer for the most part is right in front of your eyes. Here are some questions to ask with regards to how your loved ones look, the upkeep of their homes and their driving abilities:

Personal Appearance & Care

- Do they stand up straight or are they bent over? Are they leaning to one side?
- Are they maintaining their normal weight?
- When walking, is their gait strong? Or are they shuffling more than stepping?
- Are they clean and shaved? Are their nails clean? Is their hair combed?
- Are their clothes clean? Are they dressed appropriately for the weather?
- Are their buttons buttoned properly? Are zippers zipped?

Inside the Home

- Is the home kept the way it always has been or do you see a change?
- Is the kitchen sink clean? Are beds made and floors swept or vacuumed? Are plants alive?
- Is the garbage taken care of correctly?
- Does the pet have food and water?
- Are things that used to be put away now left out?
- If they take medication, is it stored neatly in a sensible place? Using the date on the bottle, can you tell if it is being taken as prescribed?
- Is mail in an unorganized pile? Are unpaid bills left around? Are checks to pay bills written but never sent?
- Does the refrigerator have old, spoiled food or not enough food?
- Are the dishes, glasses, and flatware properly put away and clean?
- Is their own bedroom, bath and closet well kept or dirty or unorganized?

Outside the Home

- Has regular maintenance been carried out on the outside of the house and on other structures?
- Are the gutters clean? Porches swept? Windows washed?
- Has the grass been mowed, the shrubs trimmed, and the flowerbeds weeded?

The Car & Driving

- Are there signs the car has been in minor accidents? Any new dents from running into the garage or another bumper?
- Is the car well maintained? What does the change-oil sticker say versus the mileage? Are the fluids full? Is the registration current?
- When you drive with them, can they get in and out of the car with ease?
- Do they drive too slowly? How is their reaction time? Do they tailgate?
- Are other drivers on the road annoyed?
- Do you feel afraid when riding with them?
- Do they know where they are going?
- Do they have trouble parking?
- Can they drive safely and confidently at highway speed?

The answers to these questions can serve as indicators of emerging concerns from waning eyesight to issues with movement and walking to the onset of dementia. If you see a pattern of decline, the cause should be determined by a physician to see if any treatments can improve or slow the condition.

As with many issues of aging, there are no hard and fast rules as to when to step in to help. However, if what you have observed leaves you feeling uncomfortable, then trust you have the evidence you need to look into finding needed support services. Good resources include local Councils on Aging where the staff can direct you to people who can help you determine what kind of support is warranted and where to find those services in your area. 🌸