

Recognizing Signs that an *Older Adult Needs Help*

Don't wait for a crisis to find out whether the older adults in your life are safe, happy, and healthy at home. Instead, watch for signs that could indicate your loved ones are not doing as well as they want you to believe:

1. **Does your loved one walk unsteadily or have unexplained bruises?** One-third of older adults fall each year, often starting a downward spiral of hospital stays.
2. **Is your loved one tentative in the way he or she walks or stands?** Those who fear falling often restrict their activities, thus making them even weaker and more insecure — and more likely to fall.
3. **Does your loved one look thinner than normal?** Many older adults have poor nutrition because they don't want to plan or fix meals — and because they may not have enough food in the house.
4. **Does your loved one seem quiet or depressed?** Feeling sad, regretful, or fearful is not normal, even for older adults. Isolation and changes in physical health can lead to depression, from which 25% of older adults suffer.
5. **Is your loved one no longer driving?** When mobility and driving are restricted, older adults will feel more isolated and will tend to neglect grocery shopping, doctor's visits, trips to the pharmacy, and more.
6. **Does your loved one have difficulty remembering major events?** Memory problems can affect every area of an older adult's life, from medication mistakes to unsafe driving, poor bedtime habits, lack of personal care, etc.
7. **Does your loved one have a large quantity of medications,** with perhaps several different doctors prescribing them? Older adults face serious health risks if they don't take their medication properly.
8. **Is your loved one's house disorganized, with chores undone or bills unpaid?** Household management can easily become overwhelming, leaving older adults embarrassed, helpless, and frustrated.
9. **Do hazards in the home put your loved one at risk?** Extension cords, basement laundry rooms, thick carpets, throw rugs, dim lighting, and too much furniture can cause falls. The risk increases even more when you add impaired vision, unsteady gait, and overmedication.
10. **Has someone close to your loved one recently become ill or passed away?** It's common for older adults to depend on someone else. When that person can't help, your loved one may not have all of his or her needs met.
11. **Do you feel your loved one is hiding the truth** by not expressing how difficult it is to care for his or her spouse? The caregiving spouse often develops more health problems than the one who is receiving care.

If you see any of these signs in your loved one, you should begin planning for the future by assessing his or her medical conditions, level of income/assets, and preferences for long-term care. Also think about your own capability for caregiving. How much time, energy, and money can you contribute to your loved one's needs?

Whether it's 3 hours a day or 24, a little help from Home Care Assistance will go a long way toward ensuring that your loved one can age well at home —which is where 89% of older adults want to stay •