

When is Homecare Needed?

It's always difficult for children to acknowledge that their parents are in need of homecare. Parents resist loss of independence; children acquiesce. However, as the following list demonstrates, there comes a time when certain clear signs mustn't be ignored:

Hygiene - Poor grooming or unmet basic self-care needs, such as bathing or repeated wearing of the same stained clothing often indicate a decline in health status.

Nutrition - Weight loss is usually a sign of poor nutrition. Take a look in the refrigerator: Little or spoiled food could be indications that the senior is no longer cooking or eating adequately.

Housework - Is the home dirtier or more cluttered than it used to be? Do you find piles of dirty laundry or dishes in the sink? A house cleaner may be all that's needed, but a poorly maintained home may signal physical decline or depression.

Health - Perhaps you notice a general sense that something isn't quite right, such as persistent fatigue. Follow your instincts and make a doctor's appointment for the person in your care – and make sure that you, or someone you trust, accompanies the senior.

Medications - Lots of unused pills may signal confusion and an inability to manage the prescribed medications. Despite being placed in a weekly box, if reminders are needed on a daily basis, in-home help is needed.

Bruises - Signs of injury, such as bruises, could indicate falls. Many seniors try to keep falls a secret, but remain vigilant since serious health problems often follow a fall.

Orientation - Note whether the elder is clear on the date, the season, current news events etc. See how they do when they're out of the house. Often function is fine at home but challenges are more apparent in less familiar settings.

Community - Check in with neighbors or anyone who works regularly in the home to find out whether there are changes in behavior. Are papers and mail stacking up? Are repetitive calls being made?

Finances - Bills routinely left unopened or unpaid are a bad sign. Setting up some simple systems may address this issue, but such disarray could also be a sign of cognitive decline.

Predators - Older seniors, especially those who live alone, tend to be lonely. They're more vulnerable to those who are accustomed to scamming the elderly out of their money. Such situations indicate that a senior's judgment is failing.