



Warning Signs Your Aging Parents Need More Help

(NAPSA)—Home care agencies often see a surge in calls in late December and early January. Why? Many grown children head home for the holidays and notice their aging parents need some help.

“We usually see a surge in demand for care around the holidays as families get together and adult children notice changes in their parents’ well-being and realize they need more support to remain safe and independent in their homes,” said Austin Harkness, head of care for Honor, one of the fastest-growing home care companies in the country. Here are ways to tell:

Take The Sniff Test

Breathe in that holiday hug. If you notice unclean clothes or an uncharacteristic body odor, that could signal that a parent is having trouble bathing, maintaining personal hygiene or keeping up with household chores such as laundry.

Next, follow your nose to the kitchen. Open the fridge. You’ll notice pretty quickly if there’s spoiled food—but your parents may not. The sense of smell diminishes with age, especially after 70. Many seniors can’t detect unpleasant odors that would normally tell them it’s time to toss last week’s meat loaf.

If the sniff test reveals some olfactory oddities, it might not just be “normal aging.” Diminished sense of smell can be an early indicator of Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s diseases. If you sense something isn’t quite right, help Mom or Dad to set up a doctor’s visit to see if there’s something else going on.

Have A Look Around

Your childhood home may look the same as ever—but it may not work as well for older adults. As people age, their environment typically needs simple upgrades to keep them safe. You can significantly reduce fall risks by taping down throw rugs, removing extra furniture, securing electrical cords out of pathways and adding grab bars in the bathroom.

Pay attention to clutter as well. Stacks of unopened mail, broken appliances or drooping houseplants may also signal a need for help. Being unable to manage everyday activities can be a symptom of depression or of cognitive impairment, which often presents like depression.



A visit to your parents can be a chance to assess whether they need help at home to stay healthy and independent.

If you see any of the above warning signs, you may want to arrange for your parent to see a doctor and for family members or professional caregivers to stop by and help with projects and chores. Just knowing your parents have help and resources can relieve worry, both yours and theirs.

Listen Up

Is the TV or radio volume blaring? Are conversations repeated? Does Mom keep asking “what?” or just smiling and nodding instead of participating? Don’t brush it off. Difficulty following conversations may be a sign of hearing loss, cognitive impairment or both.

Seniors who begin losing their hearing are at greater risk of developing dementia over time since hearing is a brain function. Sometimes, hearing aids stimulate the sounds needed for the brain to restore organization and correctly process sounds.

Making Sense Of Your Senses

Talking to parents about warning signs you’ve noticed isn’t fun. But do it anyway. Let them know you want to be involved to help them stay independent for as long as possible. Even if you live far away there’s a lot you can do, such as scheduling appointments and finding help with transportation, chores and projects. Talk to nearby family members about how they can help out or set up a visit with a home care agency that can provide ongoing support.

Fear of losing independence keeps a lot of seniors tight lipped. If your parents are open and honest about their changing needs, consider it a generous holiday gift. They trust you’ll know what to do with it.