



# How To Tell When A Senior Needs Helps

Life is a transition of lifestyles determined by age. Seniors experience age-related challenges such as the passing of relatives and friends, physical ailments, retirement and loss of driving privileges. One of the greatest fears of seniors is loss of independence and because of that fear, many seniors are reluctant to ask for help, even when they know they need assistance. Some seniors will never recognize their need for help, while others decline help due to embarrassment, cost, loss of control, and the fear of being a burden.

Because many seniors will never ask or acknowledge that they need help, it's important that their relatives and friends keep a watchful eye for signs that their loved one or friend needs help. Sometimes, the signs will be small and barely noticeable, but when a pattern of neglect is continuous, it may be serious. Keep a watchful eye out for the following:

## Signs To Watch For

<u>Basic Tasks:</u>	Difficulty in communication, dressing, cooking, managing medications, eating
<u>Daily Activities:</u>	Home interior / exterior is uncommonly unkempt, papers are piled up, bills are unpaid, financial issues, prescriptions are unfilled, phone calls aren't returned, burned cooking utensils, insufficient food supply, home odors, piled-up laundry, dents in vehicles.
<u>Hygiene:</u>	Foul mouth or body odors, Infrequent bathing, poor grooming, unkempt appearance
<u>Health:</u>	Unexplained weight loss or gain, excessive bruising, burns, hearing loss (now lip reads or talks loudly), sudden worsening of eyesight, oversleeping, insomnia, color change in skin or nails, incontinence, fatigue, constantly dropping & spilling things, dehydration.
<u>Attitude:</u>	Unusual elevated levels of depression or sadness, display of physical or verbal abuse, doesn't want to talk or communicate, distant, abnormally argumentative signs of alcohol or drugs abuse, paranoia, highly emotional or apathetic, isolated, sudden lack of interest in friends, hobbies and activities.
<u>Cognitive Functions:</u>	Abnormal or excessive forgetfulness, inability to reason, wandering, unusual personality traits or changes, easily confused (uncharacteristic) confusion, difficulty answering questions, use of repetitive words or phrases, consistently misnames family members, forgets how to use everyday items (pen, telephone), loss of sense of time and bearings.
<u>Elder Abuse:</u>	Providing loans or giving away cash or personal belongings to acquaintances or strangers. Unusual withdrawals of monies and/or missing assets. Doesn't return calls, withdrawn from family and friends, defers all communication to "new" friend.

If after careful observation you conclude that your loved one or friend does need help, then its time to bring it out for discussion. First and foremost, insure that everyone who should be involved is included in the discussion. Don't jump to conclusions or make assumptions that will cause anxiety to the family. Begin with the understanding that the probability of them telling you to mind your own business or that there is nothing wrong is almost guaranteed, as your offer of concern will be regarded by the senior as an initial signal of loss of control over their lives.

Unless the senior is a danger to themselves or others, you cannot force them to get help. The process may take some time and should be presented in a positive manner that illustrates that the assistance will not only Improve their quality of life, but in fact will help them to remain independent and in control of their life.