

What to Know When Mom or Dad Needs More Help at Home



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With holidays just around the corner, family visits can reveal changes that are easy to miss from a distance. Maybe Mom is struggling with the stairs. Dad's refrigerator is unusually empty. Medications are piling up, or getting to appointments is becoming harder.

Families often believe they need to understand the health care system before seeking help. Start with a simpler question: What has become more difficult?

- **If everyday tasks are the problem, think personal care.** Help with bathing, dressing, meals, and other daily activities makes a big difference.
- **If skilled medical care is needed at home, consider home health care.** That may include nursing and rehabilitation therapy, often after an illness, injury, or hospital stay.
- **If help is needed over time, consider long-term care.** Here's an important point: long-term care does not automatically mean a nursing home. Depending on a person's needs and eligibility, services may be provided at home.
- **If several needs are piling up at once, care coordination can help.** Managing appointments, medications, transportation, and in-home services can quickly become a full-time job.

The goal is straightforward: to remain in the home and community they know for as long as possible. If a holiday visit raises concerns, make a short list of what has changed, what your loved one still manages independently, and where help may be needed. You don't need to know every acronym before you begin. Start with the need. The right questions—and the right options—will follow.

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