

# Seven Signs an Older Parent May Need Help

Story by S. Kay Bell

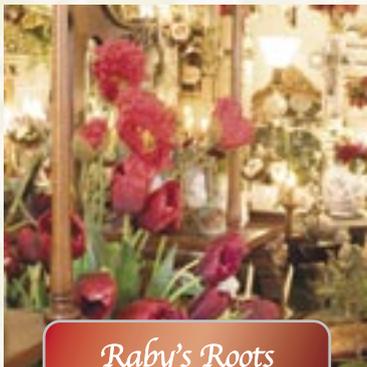
Gerontological specialists emphasize that adult children should encourage their parents' independence and autonomy as long as possible. But we also need to be able to recognize when it is the appropriate time to get Mom or Dad some help. Here are some indicators:

- **Difficulty with daily tasks.** Clear incompetencies, such as failing eyesight that impedes safe driving, are easy to spot. Also be aware of problems a senior might have with simple in-home actions, such as bathing or climbing stairs.
- **Neglected finances.** Are bills piling up, unopened around the house? If they are opened, make sure they are being paid, and paid on time. Also take a look at a bank statement to ensure the balance is sufficient and that there are no overdraft fees for bounced checks.
- **Safety risks.** When a person repeatedly forgets to turn off burners on the stove or leaves doors open or unlocked, it is time to

take steps to ensure their well-being.

- **Marked grooming changes.** A person who was always fastidious but now ignores housekeeping or personal hygiene might need some assistance.
- **Differences in diet.** This usually is not eating properly or regularly. Spoiled food in the refrigerator or a diet that is overly repetitive, e.g., the same dinner menu every night, also might warrant attention.
- **Weight changes.** Unexpected weight loss could be a sign of poor nutrition or even of depression. Weight gain could indicate the person is relying too heavily on junk food.
- **Changes in personality.** A person who is withdrawn or has stopped participating in a once-favorite activity could be depressed. Something as simple as no longer looking forward to a much loved television program could be an indicator that more care is required. Such changes also could be a sign of a physical problem.

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