



Is It Time for Home Care?

A Decision Tool for Families

Walk through the key signs that a parent may need professional support. Honest answers lead to clearer next steps.

How to Use This Tool

This assessment is designed for adult children and family members who are wondering whether a parent or loved one needs more support than they are currently receiving. It covers four areas of daily life that home care professionals consistently monitor as early indicators of increasing care needs.

Work through each section and check every box that applies to your parent right now. There are no right or wrong answers. The goal is an honest picture, not a passing grade.

Important Note

A single checked box rarely signals a crisis. A pattern across multiple categories almost always does. This tool is a starting point for a conversation, not a clinical diagnosis.

Area 1: Physical Safety and Health

Check every statement that is true of your parent right now.

☐	Has fallen, nearly fallen, or expressed fear of falling in the past six months
☐	Shows unexplained weight loss or has lost noticeable weight without trying
☐	Has food in the refrigerator that is spoiled or has gone past expiration dates
☐	Appears to be eating poorly or skipping meals
☐	Has untreated medical conditions or is delaying necessary medical appointments
☐	Has difficulty managing medications: missing doses, doubling doses, or taking the wrong ones
☐	Shows signs of dehydration or is not drinking enough fluids
☐	Has experienced a recent hospitalization or emergency room visit

Area 2: Daily Living Functions

Check every statement that is true of your parent right now.

☐	Has difficulty bathing or is bathing significantly less often than before
☐	Has trouble dressing independently or is wearing the same clothes repeatedly
☐	Struggles with grooming tasks: hair care, dental hygiene, or nail care
☐	Cannot safely prepare meals or is relying on convenience foods exclusively
☐	Has let household cleanliness decline significantly from prior standards
☐	Has unpaid bills, unopened mail, or signs of financial disorganization
☐	Can no longer drive safely or has recently stopped driving
☐	Cannot manage errands, appointments, or transportation independently
☐	Has difficulty using the phone, computer, or other communication tools they previously managed

Area 3: Cognitive and Emotional Indicators

Check every statement that is true of your parent right now.

☐	Shows noticeable memory lapses that affect daily life: missed appointments, repeated conversations, forgotten names
☐	Appears confused about time, date, or familiar surroundings
☐	Has withdrawn from hobbies, social activities, or friends they previously enjoyed
☐	Seems more anxious, fearful, or suspicious than in the past
☐	Appears depressed, tearful, or expresses hopelessness
☐	Has made questionable financial decisions or fallen victim to a scam
☐	Becomes disoriented in familiar environments or when driving familiar routes

Area 4: Caregiver Capacity

Check every statement that is true of your family situation right now.

☐	Family caregivers are stretched beyond what they can comfortably sustain
☐	The primary caregiver is experiencing stress, exhaustion, resentment, or health decline
☐	No family member lives nearby or is able to provide consistent daily support
☐	There is frequent disagreement among family members about the parent's safety or care needs
☐	The current situation feels like a crisis waiting to happen

Your Score: What the Pattern Means

Count the total number of boxes you checked across all four areas and find your range below. Remember that any single indicator in Area 1 related to a recent fall, hospitalization, or medication error may warrant immediate attention regardless of total score.

Boxes Checked	What It Suggests
0 to 2	Most daily functions appear intact. This may be an early watch stage. Suggested action: Schedule regular check-ins, document your observations, and revisit this tool in 60 to 90 days. Consider a geriatric care manager assessment to establish a baseline.
3 to 5	A meaningful pattern of concern is emerging across multiple areas. Suggested action: Have an honest conversation with your parent about what you have noticed. Consult their physician. This is the right time to research home care options before a crisis makes the decision for you.
6 or More	The pattern is clear and consistent. Professional support is likely needed now. Suggested action: Contact a licensed home care agency to schedule a care assessment. Gather legal documents (POA, HCPOA). Begin the conversation with all involved family members.

What to Do Next

Regardless of your score, the following steps apply to every family at this stage:

1	Talk to Your Parent's Physician A primary care physician who knows your parent's baseline can provide an objective assessment of their functional status and recommend appropriate levels of support. Share specific observations, not general concerns.
2	Have a Family Conversation If siblings or other close family members are involved, bring them into the conversation early. Disagreements about a parent's care are much easier to navigate before a crisis than during one.
3	Request a Home Care Assessment Most licensed home care agencies offer a free in-home assessment. A care coordinator will evaluate your parent's needs, living environment, and daily routines and provide a care recommendation with no obligation to proceed.
4	Gather Key Documents Before a crisis occurs, confirm that a durable power of attorney and healthcare power of attorney are in place. If they are not, and your parent still has legal capacity, this is the time to create them.
5	Trust the Pattern A parent who pushes back on the idea of help is not evidence that help is not needed. If your observation across multiple areas of this tool is consistent, the pattern is telling you something important.

A Note on Resistance

Most resistance to care comes from one of three places: fear of losing independence, discomfort with change, or distrust of strangers in the home. None of these fears is irrational. The most effective families address the fear directly rather than arguing about the facts. Framing care as a tool for staying at home longer, not a step toward losing it, often shifts the conversation.

This tool is for educational purposes and does not constitute a clinical assessment or diagnosis.