

When to Know When to Intervene

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Our loved ones have always been there when we needed them. So it's hard when we find a family member or a friend in a position where they can no longer take care of themselves. Today many of us face the fact that we may have to become a caregiver to a loved one as a result of a sudden crisis (e.g. stroke or accident).

According to the Alliance for Health Reform, approximately 10 million Americans age 65 and over needed long-term care in 2010, with that number expected to rise to 12 million by 2020. It is no wonder that 1.7 million of these individuals live in nursing homes, 520,000 live in assisted living facilities, and the rest are cared for by a family/friend caregiver. This number is only expected to grow as Baby Boomers begin to turn 65 this year.

As our loved ones are living longer and healthier lives, it may be hard for us to determine when they need outside care? But in general, we should look for changes that pose a threat to their medical or physical safety such as:

- **Behavior changes**
 - Changes in personal hygiene
 - Changes in tidiness or cleanliness of the home
 - Unopened mail or unpaid bills
 - Odors (e.g. from spoiled food)
 - Missed appointments
 - Getting lost in familiar places
 - Evidence of safety risks (e.g. burned pots)
 - Evidence that medications are not being taken properly

- **Physical symptoms**
 - Weight gain or loss
 - Unsteadiness when walking or getting up and down from a chair
 - Evidence of incontinence (e.g. odor of urine in their home)
 - Unusual thirst
 - Darkened house with the shades drawn
 - Decreased contact with family and friends
 - More withdrawn, less conversational

If you find yourself noticing any of these changes, don't rush in and take over. Instead discuss the issues with your loved one, their primary care physician, a gerontologist, or a senior care specialist. Once taking these steps and you determine more help is still needed don't panic there are organizations out there to help you get the **"4-1-1 to avoid having to call 9-1-1"**. Remember your responsibility to your loved is to ensure that they are safe from harm, receive the

proper nutrition, and the best care that can be afforded to them. Part or all off this care can be delegated to someone else, or arrangements such as adult daycare, home healthcare, assisted-living, or even nursing home placement can be arranged.

At Forest Street Compassionate Care Center, we understand and know it can be very stressful placing a loved one in a nursing home. Families may feel guilt over placing their relatives and anger at the circumstances that made it necessary. By working with families, we believe we can communicate more effectively with one another to help avoid and resolve problems in a timelier manner, and help families feel more empowered.

To get the “**4-1-1**” on support for caregivers or more information on Forest Street Compassionate Care Center please visit the facility at 3345 Forest Street, Denver, CO 80207, or call (303)393.7600.