

## When to Intervene:

### Red flags for when your loved one may no longer be able to live independently

Changes in physical and mental abilities can be difficult to detect in individuals with Alzheimer's disease or other dementias. Persons with progressive dementia can live independently and carry on day to day activities in the early stage. However, some individuals with early memory loss do require assistance and those with a progressive dementia will need assistance at some point in the disease process. Because it is often difficult to determine if the person with dementia does need assistance, the Alzheimer's Association has developed this tip sheet to help in determining when it is time to intervene. It is important to keep any person with Alzheimer's disease or another dementia safe from financial, physical, mental and emotional harm. If you notice several of these signals simultaneously please alert or consult a physician. Contact Alzheimer's Association for guidance and support: 24/7 Helpline 1-800-272-3900 or visit the website to learn more ([www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org))

#### Financial

- Unopened mail
- Unpaid bills
- Canceled insurance
- Unusual or repetitive purchases or abnormal financial decisions
- Disconnection of utilities
- Increase or decrease in spending, including increase in charitable contributions
- Increased number of checks written (even or consistent amounts)
- Multiple payments for services that do not require multiple payments

#### Physical

- Uncontrolled pain
- Falls and injuries
- Increased difficulties with hearing and vision
- Difficulty balancing, climbing stairs or moves slower than usual
- Difficulty with speech, word finding, reading, writing
- Avoids moving around or avoids activities previously performed
- Significant change in eating habits (forgetting to eat or drink)
- Significant weight gain or weight loss within 10-15 days
- Not taking medication as prescribed, including taking too much or not enough
- Decline in or inability to care for hygiene and housekeeping
- Safety concern when driving; ignoring signs and signals, accidents, getting lost or losing direction

#### Mental and Emotional

- Memory loss, confusion or forgetfulness
- Anxiety, mood change, unreasonable fear, thoughts of suicide
- Depression

- Difficulty concentrating
- Personality changes; crying, loss of confidence, inappropriate behavior
- Self-isolation
- Missing appointments, not taking medications or filling prescriptions
- Poor judgment
- Increased inability to cope with stress
- Repetitive actions; asking questions, repeating words, moving items, pacing
- Inability to recall people, places or objects
- Struggle to maintain conversations
- Increase in alcohol consumption, inappropriate use or abuse of medication

It is important to remember this could be a sensitive topic and must be handled with care and concern. Individuals with Alzheimer's or other dementias may lack the insight to know they are having problems. Denial and resistance on the part of an individual who is experiencing symptoms of Alzheimer's or another dementia can be common. Caregivers and other family members must learn when and how to intervene.

- Remember the person with early stage dementia has the right to self-determination.
- Pride, dignity and change frequently create fear
- Aggression and resistance can be common behaviors in individuals with Alzheimer's or another dementia
- Understand that denial and resistance is a coping mechanism for many
- Listen to, and validate, the person with dementia's feelings and thoughts
- Try to understand why the person is resistant
- Involve them in the decision making process as much as possible
- Ask, and discuss, what they are experiencing
- Explain the importance of early diagnosis or the possibility of ruling out dementia
- Hold a family meeting to make others aware of concerns and figure out an approach to address the concern with the person with dementia. Call the Alzheimer's Association to schedule a Care Consultation to address family concerns and identify next steps

### **Helpful Steps**

- Journal behaviors or changes noticed
- Contact and inform physician
- Contact the 24/7 Helpline to schedule a Care Consultation (800.272.3900)
- Educate yourself about Alzheimer's and dementia
- Establish a Care Plan (caregiver and person with dementia) [www.alzheimersnavigator.org](http://www.alzheimersnavigator.org)
- Create a Safety Plan
- Attend a support group
- Plan for the future; explore care options.
- Seek help in legal and financial planning (set up Durable Power of Attorney, guardianship, advance directives, etc.)
- Locate a physician specialist, if needed (Geriatrician, Neurologist, Geriatric Psychiatrist)

## Resources

You are not alone. The Alzheimer's Association is here to help:

- Call the Alzheimer's Association 24/7 Helpline (800.272.3900)
- Schedule a Care Consultation: Call for an appointment. Online support is also available through AlzNavigator: [www.alznavigator.org](http://www.alznavigator.org)
- Visit the Alzheimer's website: ([www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)). Explore the Caregiver Center: [www.alz.org/care/](http://www.alz.org/care/)
- Learn from others going through a similar situation: Attend support group meetings or Share support through on-line message boards: [www.alz.connected.org](http://www.alz.connected.org)
- Investigate care options: Go to Community Resource Finder: [www.communityresourcefinder.org](http://www.communityresourcefinder.org)
- Coordinate care through the Alzheimer's Association Care Team Calendar: [www.alz.org/care/alzheimers-dementia-care-calendar.asp](http://www.alz.org/care/alzheimers-dementia-care-calendar.asp)

## Sources:

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Elder Care 911 - Intervening with Elderly Parents. (n.d.). Retrieved May 6, 2015, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R4qr32TKRog>