



5 SIMPLE WAYS TO ASSESS THE SAFETY AND WELL-BEING OF AGING PARENTS

The holidays tend to bring families together to celebrate traditions, enjoy time with one another and reminisce with loved ones. Often these family events come with the recognition that too much time has passed and quite a bit has changed since the last visit. This is especially true for adult children with aging parents. It's not uncommon for the holiday visit to spark awareness that mom or dad may need some help.

A visit to a parent's home offers a great opportunity for adult children to proactively look for clues about a parent's health, safety and ability to live independently. Here are five ways to get started.

1. **Take stock of their home.** Look for stacks of unopened mail and piles of laundry. Does the home appear reasonably clean and tidy, or is there unusual clutter? Are there other clues that declining health is impacting mobility?
2. **Check the fridge.** Is there outdated or spoiled food that might indicate an inability to go to the grocery store or market? This could be another sign of limited mobility, or a cognitive issue if they are not aware that the food is spoiled.
3. **Check the cabinets.** Are there misplaced items like cleaning supplies in the food pantry, or expired prescriptions in the medicine cabinet? Such occurrences could indicate confusion, memory loss or impaired cognitive ability.
4. **Assess your loved one's appearance.** Are mom and dad well groomed, do you notice any significant weight loss or gain? Physical changes are often clues to other issues.
5. **Watch your loved one.** Are they able to hear well, follow conversations and recognize other family members? Do they interact equally well in an unfamiliar environment? Cognitive difficulties can be an indication of deteriorating health.

For more tips on how to assess the health and safety of aging loved ones, review the comprehensive A Place for Mom Senior Safety & Well-Being Checklist available [here](#). The guide includes 55 questions covering six different categories.

— *Joan Lunden*

Former host of "Good Morning America"