

Spotting the signs that a loved one may need an assisted living facility

The holidays give families a chance to come together, even if it's all too brief. Sometimes it's a joyful affair, other times there is a sense that things are not quite the same or that something seems "off."

Annual get-togethers can capture if something is amiss. Physical ailments can often times cause increased functional limitations. Or, dealing with grief from the loss of a loved one can enhance depression. It is important to address these issues and determine if living independently continues to be a safe and appropriate consideration. Assisted living offers older individuals an independent lifestyle that they are accustomed to, but also ensures that a loved one obtains appropriate medical care as well as proper nutrition and socialization. Maura Kish, RN, BSN, director of nursing at The Villa at Florham Park, spoke with NJ Advance Media about how to determine if it's time to consider an assisted living facility.

Q: What are some visual clues that a loved one may need assistance with daily activities?

A: If families notice that mom or dad

rarely changes out of their bedclothes, or goes more than a few days without bathing or showering, or no longer runs errands outside the home, there may be cause for concern. If they no longer make a warm or healthy meal for themselves, they may lack the physical coordination or endurance to prepare it.

Some seniors also will show signs of hoarding — accumulating items, food, or the like, in a hidden or carefully guarded place for preservation, or future use — which may prohibit their mobility within a designated space. Hoarding also can produce unhealthy conditions in the home.

Q: What behaviors should prompt a family discussion about moving a loved one to an assisted living residence?

A: When the individual has one or more episodes that compromise their safety, such as driving while disoriented, forgetting to take necessary medications, or leaving cooking pots on the stove, the family should come together and address whether an assisted

living setting would provide a safer environment for them to maintain their independence. Your loved one's safety should be the highest priority.

Q: What specifically does assisted living offer?

A: The most important component of assisted living is the peace of mind the family has, knowing their loved one is in a safe environment with immediate access to nursing care. Assisted living offers personal care assistance with the activities of daily living, such as medication administration, showering, dressing and mobility. In addition, it provides the individual with three nutritious meals a day, and numerous opportunities to socialize and remain active. It also fosters a more natural setting for friendship and companionship. In addition, there are a variety of activities that can engage residents, from art and music, to shopping trips and plays.

If a resident has dementia or a memory impairment, an assisted living residence provides a secure yet stimulating environment

for them to remain active and independent, while eliminating the chance of elopement. The Villa at Florham Park can be a blessing for a loved one and their family.

For more information on assisted living or to obtain additional senior resources, contact The Villa at Florham Park at (973) 867-1502 or visit www.thevillafp.org.

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