



Castleton
Home Care

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR ADULT CHILDREN

Is It Time for Help at Home?

A Practical Checklist for Adult Children
of Aging Parents

*"How to recognize the signs early, avoid a crisis,
and keep Mom or Dad safe at home."*



FOR FAMILIES

About This Guide

If you're asking yourself, "*Is it time to get Mom some help at home?*" it usually means something has already changed. Maybe it's a few more little mishaps, a nagging feeling you can't shake, or that one visit where the house didn't look quite like it used to.

It's very common to feel torn — afraid of *moving too fast* and hurting your parent's independence, but just as afraid of waiting too long and facing a fall, emergency room visit, or last-minute crisis. This guide gives you a concrete, plain-language checklist you can walk through step by step — so you can see the signs more clearly, understand what they might mean, and decide on realistic next steps.

Who This Checklist Is For

- **Adult children in their 40s–60s** juggling work, kids, and aging parents.
- **Long-distance sons and daughters** trying to figure out what's really happening between visits.
- **Local family caregivers** who are starting to feel burnt out, overwhelmed, or uneasy about leaving a parent alone.

This guide is not medical advice and cannot diagnose any condition. It is meant to help you notice important changes, organize what you're seeing, and have more informed conversations with your parent, their doctor, and care professionals.

Why This Checklist Matters

Many families don't seriously consider getting help at home until *after* a fall, hospitalization, or other scary close call. By that point, everyone is reacting to a crisis instead of making calm, thoughtful decisions.

Bringing in support **earlier** — before something big happens — can lower the risk of falls, poor nutrition, and medication mix-ups, and may help your parent stay at home longer instead of needing a sudden move to a higher level of care.

HOW TO USE THIS

The Checklist: Key Areas to Watch

Go through each section below and check any statements that apply to your parent. At the end, tally your checks and use the **Scoring Guide** to see what they might mean for next steps.

SECTION 1

Daily Living & Personal Care

These are the basic activities – bathing, dressing, and moving around – that someone needs to manage safely on their own. If several of these are true, extra help at home may be needed.

Check any that apply to your parent or loved one:

- Skips baths or showers, or seems reluctant to bathe at all.
- Has strong body odor, greasy hair, or looks generally unwashed.
- Wears the same clothes for several days in a row.
- Clothes are often stained, dirty, or not appropriate for the weather.
- Struggles to get out of chairs, off the toilet, or in and out of bed without help.
- Moves very slowly or holds on to furniture and walls to steady themselves.
- Has new bruises or "mystery" injuries they can't clearly explain.
- Seems unsteady in the bathroom, especially getting in or out of the tub or shower.
- Avoids certain activities (like bathing or going upstairs) because they're afraid of falling.
- Has noticeable changes in grooming (uncombed hair, unshaven face, long or dirty nails) compared to how they used to be.

If you've checked several items here, it may be time to consider extra support with personal care – either from family, a trusted friend, or a professional caregiver who can help your parent stay clean, safe, and dignified at home.

SECTION 2

Home Environment & Household Tasks

A parent's home often tells you as much as their words do. Changes in cleanliness, organization, and how well basic chores are done can signal physical limits, memory issues, or both.

Check any that apply to your parent or loved one:

- Stacks of unopened mail, unpaid bills, or late-payment notices are visible.
- Important papers are scattered or lost; your parent seems confused about finances.
- There is spoiled or expired food in the fridge, or the fridge/pantry is almost empty.
- Dirty dishes are piled up in the sink or around the house.
- Trash isn't taken out regularly; there are strong odors or overflowing bins.
- Laundry is piling up, or there are very few clean clothes or towels available.
- The house looks noticeably more cluttered or disorganized than it used to.
- Walkways are blocked with clutter, cords, or rugs that could cause a fall.
- Basic household repairs (burned-out bulbs, broken handles, leaks) are ignored.
- You see signs of missed tasks with appliances — like scorched pans, stove left on, or unopened deliveries.

A messy or neglected house doesn't automatically mean your parent doesn't care — it can be a sign that chores are physically too hard, mentally overwhelming, or simply being forgotten. Noticing early gives you a chance to bring in light help with housekeeping, meals, or errands before safety becomes a serious concern.

SECTION 3

Health, Medication, and Mobility

Changes in health, how someone moves, and how they manage medications can be some of the clearest signs that it's time to bring in more support.

Check any that apply to your parent or loved one:

- You notice clear weight loss or weight gain; their clothes hang much looser or tighter than before.
- They seem weaker, more easily tired, or short of breath with routine activities.
- They miss doctor appointments, mix up dates, or seem confused about what the doctor said.
- They don't follow through on recommended tests, referrals, or therapy.
- Pill bottles are disorganized, with multiple open bottles of the same medication.
- You find pills not taken, taken twice, or mixed up in the wrong containers.
- They say they "forget" whether they've taken their medicine, or you notice skipped doses.
- There have been one or more recent falls, near-falls, or "slips" they downplay.
- They seem unsteady when walking, especially on rugs, steps, or uneven surfaces.
- They avoid stairs or certain rooms because they're afraid of tripping or falling.

If you've checked several items in this section, it's a strong signal to talk with their doctor. Bring this checklist to the appointment and be specific about what you're seeing. The doctor can review medications, look for underlying health issues, and help determine whether added support at home would be a wise next step.

SECTION 4

Memory, Mood, and Safety

Changes in memory, personality, and judgment can affect safety just as much as physical decline. A few scattered "senior moments" can be normal – but repeating patterns and safety issues deserve closer attention.

Check any that apply to your parent or loved one:

- Repeats the same questions or stories within a short period of time.
- Gets confused about the day, date, or time of day more than occasionally.
- Gets lost on familiar routes or seems unsure how to get home from usual places.
- Has noticeable mood changes – more irritability, anger, anxiety, or sadness than before.
- Withdraws from activities, friends, or hobbies they used to enjoy.
- Shows poor judgment (falling for scams, unusual purchases, or giving away money).
- Has had recent fender benders, traffic tickets, or close calls while driving.
- Family members are worried about their driving but your parent insists they are "fine."

If you're seeing multiple signs in this section, it's important to schedule a medical evaluation – ideally with a primary care doctor or specialist who understands memory and cognitive changes. They can help sort out what's normal aging vs. what could indicate something more serious.

SECTION 5

Social Connection and Loneliness

Social isolation doesn't always look dramatic. Sometimes it's quiet – more cancelled plans, fewer phone calls, and long stretches of time alone – and it can hide bigger physical, emotional, or cognitive problems underneath.

Check any that apply to your parent or loved one:

- Rarely leaves the house anymore, except for essential appointments.
- Frequently cancels plans or says "maybe next time" to visits or outings.
- Has very few regular phone calls or visits with friends or extended family.
- Used to be active in church, clubs, or hobbies but has mostly stopped participating.
- Often says, "I don't want to bother anyone," but sounds lonely or down when you talk.
- Calls you multiple times a day "just to chat," and seems reluctant to hang up.
- Mentions feeling bored, useless, or like "everyone is busy with their own lives."

Loneliness and isolation are linked to higher risks of depression, cognitive decline, and physical health problems in older adults. Companion care – a caregiver who visits for conversation, walks, activities, and light help – can make a big difference by providing regular social contact and an extra set of eyes on how your parent is really doing.

SECTION 6 — ABOUT YOU

Your Own Stress and Gut Feelings

Sometimes the clearest sign that it's time for help isn't about your parent at all — it's about *you* and how you're coping.

Check any that apply to you:

- You worry about your parent every day and have trouble relaxing, even after you've checked on them.
- You're getting frequent "small crisis" calls (locked out, can't get up from a chair, minor scares).
- You feel a jolt of anxiety whenever the phone rings, wondering if it's "the call."
- You're losing sleep, feeling burned out, or snapping at family because you're stretched too thin.
- There's growing tension or open disagreements with siblings about "how bad it really is" or what to do next.
- You've caught yourself thinking, "If something happens, I'll never forgive myself," more than once.

Your instincts matter. If your body and your gut are telling you that things aren't okay — even if you can't point to one big incident yet — that's worth listening to. This checklist is here to back up those feelings with concrete observations so you can move from silent worry to clearer decisions and real support.

TALLY YOUR RESULTS

Scoring Guide: What Your Checks Mean

Count up the total number of boxes you checked across all six sections. Enter your total here: _____ then find your range below.

Total checks: _____

0-2
checks
**Monitor
Closely**

You're seeing only a few concerns — but stay alert.

- Plan regular check-ins by phone and in person.
- Make simple home safety tweaks (remove trip hazards, add better lighting, review meds).
- Consider a medical review or annual wellness visit to establish a baseline.

3-5
checks
**Time to
Explore Help**

You're seeing a pattern — your parent may benefit from support.

- Talk with their doctor about what you're seeing — especially falls, memory, or medication.
- Schedule a home safety assessment through a healthcare provider or qualified agency.
- Contact reputable home care agencies to learn what a few hours of help could look like.

6+ checks
or major event
**Support
Needed Now**

At this level, it's risky to wait and see.

- Arrange an urgent medical review to understand the appropriate level of care.
- Have a serious, honest family conversation about what's happening and who can help.
- Call a reputable home care agency or care manager to discuss in-home support options.



You can always adjust up or down over time – but this scoring gives you a clear starting point for what to do next, instead of staying stuck in *"I don't know if it's bad enough yet."*

UNDERSTANDING YOUR OPTIONS

What Non-Medical Home Care Can Do

What it includes:

- Help with bathing and dressing
- Toileting and personal hygiene
- Walking and transfers
- Meal planning and cooking
- Light housekeeping and laundry
- Errands and transportation
- Companionship and activities
- Medication reminders (prompting – not managing prescriptions)

What it does NOT include:

- Skilled nursing or wound care
- Injections or medical procedures
- Physical or occupational therapy

Non-medical home care works *alongside* the medical team – the doctors and nurses handle diagnoses and treatments, while caregivers help with the day-to-day routines that keep your parent safe, clean, nourished, and less alone between appointments.

Real-Life Examples

After Dad's Fall

A caregiver comes each morning to help him get out of bed, bathe safely, get dressed, and make breakfast – so he doesn't risk another accident in the bathroom or kitchen.

When Mom's Memory Slips

A companion spends afternoons with her – preparing a snack, going for a short walk, helping with simple chores, and keeping her engaged – so she's not alone all day and you can work without constant worry.

Non-medical home care is very flexible. Some families start with just a few hours a week and add time as needs change. Others bring in daily or even 24/7 support after a major health event.

HELPFUL LANGUAGE

Conversation Starters With Your Parent

Bringing up help at home can feel awkward or confrontational. These simple phrases can open the door without making your parent feel attacked or "taken over."

"I've noticed a few things that make me worry about you being alone. Can we talk about them?"

"I want you to stay in this house as long as possible. Can we look at some help that makes that safer?"

"Can we try a little help for a month and see how it feels? If you hate it, we'll rethink."

"I know you've always been independent. Getting a bit of help is one way to keep that independence, not lose it."

"It would give me a lot of peace of mind to know someone is checking in when I can't be here. Would you be open to that for my sake?"

"Instead of doing everything at once, what if we just started with help for [bathing/cleaning/errands] and see how that goes?"

"You took care of everyone for years. Let's put a little support in place now so you don't have to do every single thing on your own."

KNOW WHO TO CALL**When to Involve Professionals**

You don't have to – and shouldn't – figure all of this out on your own. Certain signs on your checklist are a good reason to bring in professionals who see these situations every day.

Primary Care Doctor or Geriatrician

Call if you're seeing changes in health, mood, memory, falls, or medication issues. They can check for underlying medical problems, adjust medications, and help determine what kind of support at home is medically appropriate.

Occupational Therapist – Home Safety Assessment

If you're worried about falls, bathroom safety, or how your parent moves around the house, an OT can walk through the home, identify hazards, and recommend specific changes or equipment (like grab bars) to reduce risk.

Local Area Agency on Aging (Empowerline in Atlanta)

Area Agencies on Aging connect older adults and family caregivers with community resources – meals, transportation, caregiver support, respite, and benefits counseling. They can help you see what programs exist locally.

Non-Medical Home Care Agency (like Castleton Home Care)

When the checklist and your gut both say "we need more hands," a reputable home care agency can provide a free in-home consultation, suggest an appropriate level of support, and give you clear information about services and costs.

QUICKSTART – GET MOVING

This Week's 3 Action Steps

If this guide feels like a lot, here's a simple way to get started. Just focus on these three steps over the next week.

1**Step 1: Print and Complete the Checklist**

- Set aside 15–20 quiet minutes.
- Go through each section and check anything that sounds like your parent.
- Add up your total checks and review the scoring guide above.

2**Step 2: Pick Your Top 3 Concerns to Discuss**

- Circle or highlight the three items that worry you most (e.g., recent falls, medication mix-ups, big mood changes).
- Plan a conversation with your parent about those specific concerns.
- Make a short list of questions to bring to their doctor based on what you checked.

3**Step 3: Contact 1–2 Trusted Local Providers**

- Reach out to your local Area Agency on Aging (Empowerline in Atlanta) to ask about community programs.
- Contact at least one reputable home care agency – such as Castleton Home Care in North Metro Atlanta – for a free, no-obligation consultation.
- Use what you learn to sketch a simple first-step plan (e.g., "2 mornings a week of help with showers and meals, then reassess in 60 days").

For North Metro Atlanta families, Castleton Home Care offers a complimentary **"Is It Time for Help at Home?"** consultation – we'll review your checklist, answer your questions, and suggest realistic first steps. No pressure, no obligation.



How Castleton Home Care Can Help

Castleton Home Care serves families across North Metro Atlanta. We offer a free, no-obligation in-home consultation to review your checklist and help right-size a care plan for your parent.

- Free in-home assessment — no pressure, no commitment
- Flexible care plans starting at just a few hours per week
- Caregivers matched to your parent's personality and needs

Call today for your complimentary "Is It Time for Help?" consultation.

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DISCLAIMER

This guide is for educational and informational purposes only and does not constitute medical, legal, psychological, or financial advice. The checklist and scoring guide are general tools intended to help families organize observations and initiate conversations — they cannot diagnose any medical condition or replace a professional evaluation. Every individual's situation is unique. Always consult a qualified healthcare provider, physician, geriatric specialist, or licensed professional before making decisions about care. Programs, services, and resources vary by location and may change over time. Castleton Home Care, LLC is a non-medical home care provider serving North Metro Atlanta and does not provide medical, nursing, or clinical services.

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