

Four Key Areas:

48 Hours at Home Over the Holidays

There's no place like home for the holidays, but the truth is that those brief home visits can become stressful if you notice your aging parents declining quickly. You can preemptively combat this stress by preparing a list of items to check up on during your home visit, even if it's just for a few days. Here are the 4 areas to check if you have 48 hours at home for the holidays.

1. Check for home maintenance issues.

- Air filters
- Lightbulbs
- Locks on all windows and doors
- Faucets
- HVAC
- Loose boards on stairs or the porch
- Make sure there are non-slip mats in the bathroom
- Assess the amount of extra stuff in the house: are there piles of newspapers that could cause a fall or be a potential fire hazard?
- Vehicles: ensure the starter turns over, the brakes work and there aren't any service lights on in the dash

2. Understand their financial situation and where important documents are located.

- Bank account numbers, names of financial institutions and the location of financial records
- Monthly expenses and income--are your parents able to pay the bills?
- Health insurance status, including Medicare and Medicaid and the location of health insurance documents
- Location of medical records
- Ask if they've named a power of attorney for both finances and healthcare and about the location of those documents
- Location of any titles, deeds, etc. in case a medical situation escalates and downsizing becomes necessary

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3. Check nutrition, medications and memory.

- Check pantry and fridge for fresh fruit, vegetables and protein.
- If you're concerned about your parents eating too much pre-packaged or fast food, consider applying for Meals on Wheels.
- Check that medications are organized and labeled properly. If they aren't, buy a few days-of-the-week pill containers and fill and label them yourself.
- If medications are prescribed by a few different doctors, write down the names of the drugs and ask your own pharmacist if they're safe to take together.
- Ask people who see your parents often--like neighbors, friends, or even grocery store clerks--if they've noticed any changes in your parents' behavior that may indicate failing memory.
- If you're concerned about signs of dementia, make a doctor's appointment as soon as possible and plan to go with your parents--many causes (like medication side effects or kidney problems) can be remedied if caught early.

4. Ask what they need or want.

- Do they need anything taken to Goodwill or the dump?
- Do they feel safe? Is there a plan in place in case of emergencies?
- Are they bored? There are tons of fun classes and events that accommodate seniors. Start by contacting your local senior services and check with churches in the area.
- Are they feeling lonely or ignored? Make sure that tending their physical needs doesn't overshadow valuable time you could be spending together.

We provide our DIY information as a service to families settling estates or helping with a family member's transitions to assisted living. If your project is too large or complicated to manage yourself, give us a call anytime for a free consultation: (800) 913-7747.