The holiday check in

How to have conversations about care

A guide for families who are starting to worry that something's not quite right.

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The holidays are often a time when families notice that Mum or Dad seems different. Maybe they're more forgetful, slower to follow a conversation, or less steady on their feet.

You might be wondering:

- "Is this just ageing, or something more?"
- "What if this is the start of dementia?"
- "What do I do next?"

Here's the good news: you don't have to work this out alone.
With Mable and Melissa Levi's Early Warning Signs Checklist, you can identify the warning signs that, when spotted early, can make a huge difference to Mum or Dad's health, safety, and quality of life.

The early warning signs checklist

Memory and thinking

- ◯ You notice they repeat the same questions or stories within a short period.
- ◯ They forget details of recent events or conversations that they'd usually remember.
- ◯ They lose track of what day it is, miss appointments, double-book themselves, or seem confused about plans.
- ◯ They struggle to follow or contribute to a group conversation.
- ◯ They appear more easily overwhelmed or anxious when too much is happening at once.
- ◯ They get lost or seem disoriented in a place they know well.
- ◯ They have unopened mail, unpaid bills, or are confused about managing money.

Everyday tasks and routines

- ◯ The fridge or pantry has spoiled or expired food, multiples of the same item, or is unusually empty.
- ◯ You notice clothing that's stained, worn repeatedly, or inappropriate for the weather.
- ◯ They look less well-groomed than usual (e.g. hair unwashed, clothes not matching, or unpleasant odours).
- ◯ The house or garden looks unusually messy, cluttered or neglected.
- ◯ They seem unsure how to use familiar appliances (microwave, TV remote, phone).
- ◯ They're no longer engaging in their typical routines and hobbies (e.g. morning walks, crossword puzzles, cooking).
- ◯ They've stopped attending regular activities, declined invitations, or spend most days at home.

Mobility and physical health

- ◯ You notice they are shuffling their feet, use furniture to steady themselves, or hesitate on stairs.
- ◯ Their walking looks different: slower, uneven, or stiffer than before.
- ◯ You notice new bruises or vague stories about "little bumps" or "nearly tripping".
- ◯ There have been one or more falls, even minor ones, in recent months.
- ◯ They struggle to get up from a chair or need more rest than usual.
- ◯ Their clothes seem looser or tighter; possible weight loss or gain.
- ◯ They have unexplained new scratches, dents, or damage on their car.
- ◯ During a short drive, you notice hesitation, missed turns, or slow reactions.
- ◯ They've mentioned getting lost or confused while driving, walking, or shopping.

Mood and personality

- ◯ You notice they seem more withdrawn, tearful, irritable, or flat.
- ◯ Their warmth, sense of humour or confidence seems to have faded.
- ◯ They seem to have lost interest in the things that used to bring them joy.
- ◯ They say things that seem out of character or slightly "off".
- ◯ You may notice slight changes in judgment, such as decisions that seem out of character (e.g., unusual or large purchases).
- ◯ Old friends or neighbours mention that they "seem different lately".

What this means

Please don't panic if you ticked a few boxes. This checklist isn't about diagnosis; it's simply about noticing changes, so your family can act early, not react later. Use what you find as a guide for gentle conversations and a GP visit in the new year. Together, Mable and Melissa Levi are here to help you through each step, and the following guides will take you through:

1. **How to talk to Mum or Dad about your concerns** – how to raise concerns with Mum or Dad, without conflict or "ruining Christmas."
2. **The next right step: Supporting Mum or Dad to see the GP** - what to say, what to ask, and how to get the right help.
3. **How to introduce home care successfully** – how to bring care into Mum or Dad's life positively and respectfully.

Each step will help you feel calmer and more capable, and enable Mum or Dad to receive the care they deserve.

Always remember, you don't need to figure this out on your own

With the right knowledge and support, we can genuinely make the journey ahead – whatever that might be for your family – that bit easier for you and the people you love most.



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