



Holiday Visits: A Great Time to See if Mom Needs Assistive Aids By Tyrrell Hunter



“Furniture Walking” Indoors

Do you notice that your parents use furniture to balance themselves while walking inside now? Possibly, the furniture has been re-arranged slightly so they have something to hold onto when walking throughout the house. For that matter, do you notice that Mom or Dad is no longer using some rooms of the house or is using limited walking patterns? Diminished balance and the resulting fear of falling are real concerns as one ages.

A simple cane or walker can add the stability one needs, but many people resist using a cane or a walker as long as possible. They don't want to look impaired (or look old) or they won't admit to needing a walking aid. Your job is to convince your parent that a walking aid is like a pair of reading glasses to help someone read. After finally admitting to needing reading glasses, most people remember how easy it was to read again when they put on their reading glasses for the first time. Likewise, a cane or a walker will help them walk easily and safely again and make them wish they had done it sooner!

Changes in Bathing Habits

This is a sensitive topic to approach with your parent, but if you haven't seen them in a while, it is a discussion that you should have. Statistically, bathrooms are the most accident-prone rooms in the house, so it is imperative that you check out how your parent functions in the bathroom. Ask him or her how they are bathing and how often. Ask them if they are using the tub or shower and ask them to show you how they access it.

Ask them if they are having any difficulty getting up from the toilet. Observing how they get up from a regular chair in the house will give you an indication of how easily they are using the toilet. While bathrooms may be accident hot spots, several assistive aids can make them safer.

Continued on Next Page

If you don't live near your aging parents, holiday visits are a great time to observe your parents' behaviors and physical capabilities to see if they need more help performing daily activities. With some additional resources, such as appropriate assistive aids, your parents may be able to stay healthy and independent.

No Longer Taking Outdoors Walks

If Mom or Dad used to walk outside regularly but now does not, he or she is not getting vital exercise. Decreased muscle strength, reduced balance, or diminishing respiratory capabilities may make someone reluctant to walk for a distance due to fear of not making it back safely. But this is a Catch 22 in that less exercise will cause someone to lose mobility capabilities more quickly.

A Rollator

A walker with four wheels, brakes and a seat may enable your parent to walk further because they can stop and rest whenever they need to, then continue their walk.

There are two caveats about rollators:

- The person should have the cognitive ability to set the brakes before sitting down,
- The person should be able to “stay with” the rollator. Because rollators move so easily, the unit can get out ahead of a person if that person has too slow a gait.

Assistive Aids *(continued from page 1)*

All bathtubs, showers and toilets should be equipped with easily accessible Grab Bars that can be used to steady oneself, as well as a Bath Seat that can help prevent a fall in the bathtub or shower. A Transfer Bench can make getting in and out of the tub possible. A Hand-Held Shower Nozzle makes bathing while sitting down possible. Raised Toilet Seats and Safety Rails make rising up from the toilet easier and safer.

Wearing the Same Clothes

Do you notice that one of your parents is wearing the same type of clothes, the exact same clothes, or worse yet, isn't getting dressed daily? For numerous reasons — such as decreased hand strength, decreased arm or shoulder rotation, increased tremors or arthritis - dressing can become a daunting challenge. Simple tasks like pulling up a zipper, lifting arms to put on a pull-over sweater, putting on socks, or tying shoes, become impossible over time for many people. Often, when a particular task begins to become difficult, people may stop doing that task prematurely, which causes an even quicker decline in ability. Dressing Aids, such as Zipper Pulls, Sock Aids, Elastic Shoelaces, Long Handle Shoe Horns — products known as Aids to Daily Living — can help your parent accomplish these everyday tasks.

Not Putting Items Away and/or Not Using Typical Products

After a lifetime of keeping a tidy home, you may see that your parent is leaving items on the kitchen, bathroom or workbench counters that they hadn't in the past. This is fine if they are just choosing to leave items out, but it may be an indication that they have lost hand and arm strength and are unable to put things away.

If they have stopped using particular products, the problem may be that they are unable to open the jar, bottle, or package. Reachers or Grabbers enable someone to extend reach and accomplish many tasks (like recovering socks that fall between the washer and drier!). Other Aids to Daily Living help with dining and meal preparation, such as special bottle and can openers and large-grip dining utensils.

Difficulty Getting Up From or Not Sitting on Their Usual Chair

On your visit, you notice that parents are having trouble getting up from their regular TV-watching chair or may be sitting in a different chair now, one that has a higher seat and is less "cushy." Trying to stand up when one has impaired strength, balance issues, or pain and stiffness from arthritis and other medical conditions is difficult when gravity is working against the process.

If your parents are working hard to stand up and making several attempts or rocking to gain momentum, there is potential to fall. Maybe your parents are completely incapable of standing up from a comfortable chair, so they have changed to a different chair. Some physicians feel that the effort of getting out of the chair is a form of exercise, which is true, but there is that line between what is safe to do for exercise for some people and what puts other people at risk.

By observing your parent's efforts, you may feel that he or she needs help. Lift Chairs, reclining chairs with a lifting mechanism that slowly raises a person up to a standing position, offer comfortable sitting positions in many different styles, along with many fabric choices.

Above all, parents do not want to be a burden to their children, and they do not want to bother you. They may not disclose or acknowledge certain struggles to you during phone conversations. While they try to adapt to their changing physical capabilities, sometimes they need more help. You may hear "Oh, I'm fine," but you really should take a closer look at how your parents handle daily tasks, especially if you don't see them often. Adding assistive aids can make a huge difference and keep your parents safer, healthier, and happier.



May the Holiday
season fill your
home with joy,
your heart with
love, and your life
with laughter.

Do you have an email address? Want to receive your newsletters electronically? Please submit your email address to jferril@thrive-alliance.org for future correspondence! If you desire a listing of caregiver support groups, whether live or virtual, please email or call me at 812-399-5854. We also have a Thrive Alliance Caregiver Resources Facebook group. Please e-mail or call if you would like to be a part of the group. If you want removed from the mailings, please let me know as well.



Name: _____ Date: _____ 



December Word Scramble



The letters of the words below are jumbled. Unscramble the letters and write the word on the blank line provided.

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1. ATASN _____ | 13. FSTGI _____ |
| 2. AAONVTIC _____ | 14. LDCO _____ |
| 3. NKAAWZA _____ | 15. HGSLIT _____ |
| 4. ECSIOLST _____ | 16. ILAYMF _____ |
| 5. OCACO _____ | 17. WOSN _____ |
| 6. ETWTHLF _____ | 18. TPAYR _____ |
| 7. KAHKNUHA _____ | 19. IERWTN _____ |
| 8. DESL _____ | 20. RETE _____ |
| 9. OSCLRA _____ | 21. VERTLA _____ |
| 10. EYUL _____ | 22. OYST _____ |
| 11. AITHMSCRS _____ | 23. OOESIK _____ |
| 12. YAITRCH _____ | 24. EARTDECO _____ |

- | | | | | |
|-----------|----------|---------|----------|----------|
| carols | cookies | Kwanzaa | snow | twelfth |
| charity | decorate | lights | solstice | vacation |
| Christmas | family | party | toys | winter |
| cocoa | gifts | Santa | travel | yule |
| cold | Hanukkah | sled | tree | |





Managing Caregiver Stress

Thursday, Dec. 18
10:00 am - 11:30 am
VIRTUAL SESSION
ZOOM link will be
provided

Powerful Tools FOR Caregivers

Caregiving can be stressful —physically,
emotionally, and financially.

Join us for a workshop for caregivers to learn
about self-care strategies and techniques to
increase relaxation and reduce stress.

Manage the daily stresses you face
as a caregiver.

Space is limited, so sign up today!



Program is **FREE**, but registration
by **December 17** is required.
To register, call **812-372-6918 Ext 2402** or
email **jferril@thrive-alliance.org**