Mom or Dad Can No Longer Live Alone: What to Do First

Use this when you've realized a parent is struggling and you don't know where to begin: what to make safe this week, who to call, how to cover the next two weeks, and how to decide what comes next.

First: is anyone in danger right now?
Call 911 for a fall with injury or a parent who can't get up, chest pain, trouble breathing, sudden confusion, or signs of a stroke. **Call the doctor today** for new confusion, a fall without injury, or not eating or drinking.

This week: make things safer while you decide

You don't have to solve everything this week. Pick the risks that could cause real harm and deal with those first.

- ☐ **Falls:** clear the path from bed to bathroom, add night lights, remove loose rugs, and make sure a phone is within reach of the floor.
- ☐ **The stove:** if pots have been left on, ask about an automatic shut-off device, or unplug or disconnect the stove for now.
- ☐ **Medicines:** check for missed or doubled doses. Use a weekly pill organizer, and ask the pharmacist for a review.
- ☐ **Getting help in an emergency:** a medical alert button, or a daily check-in call at the same time each day.
- ☐ **Food:** check the refrigerator for spoiled food and an empty pantry. Arrange groceries or meals for the week.
- ☐ **Money and mail:** look for unpaid bills, shut-off notices, and scam letters or calls.
- ☐ **Driving:** new dents or getting lost? Talk about it, and take a ride with them.
- ☐ **Wandering:** if they have gone out and gotten lost, tell a neighbor and make sure they carry ID.

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The first calls to make

Who	Why	Name and number	Done
Their doctor	Report what you've seen; ask for a visit that checks thinking, falls and medicines.		
Other family	Share what you've seen before anyone decides anything.		
Area Agency on Aging	Local services: meals, rides, help at home, caregiver support. Find yours at eldercare.acl.gov or 1-800-677-1116.		
Their pharmacist	A review of every medicine, including over-the-counter.		
A neighbor or friend nearby	Someone who can check in and call you.		

Covering the next two weeks

While the family decides, who covers each day? A visit, a call or a meal counts.

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Week 1							
Week 2							

Then decide what comes next

The question is usually not "can she live alone?" but "what would it take for her to live safely?" Work through these in order:

- ☐ **Ask your parent** what matters most to them and what help they would accept. Their wishes come first.
- ☐ **Write down what they need help with**, area by area, and how often (see checklist 2 and the care needs checklist).
- ☐ **Look at every option**, from more help at home to moving in with family to assisted living. The Decision Ladder lays out eight.
- ☐ **Put a cost next to each option**, and who would pay.
- ☐ **Meet as a family** to agree on a plan and who does what (see checklist 3).

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What we're most worried about

Your parent leads, when they can. Most decisions are theirs to make, and health questions belong with their doctor. This checklist helps your family organize and take the next step together.

The Family Caregiver Quick-Start: 1. Can No Longer Live Alone: What to Do First · 2. Signs a Parent Needs More Help · 3. Preparing for a Family Care Meeting · 4. Choosing a Home Care Agency · 5. Preparing for a Home Care Assessment · 6. What to Bring to a Medical Appointment · 7. Organizing a Parent's Important Information. All at AgingAtHomeSupport.com/caregiver-quick-start/

For a written plan the whole family can share, The Family Care Plan workbook is at AgingAtHomeSupport.com/family-care-plan/

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