



Tuality Healthcare
Building a healthier community.
Center for Geriatric Psychiatry
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info

mental health

Unable to Ask for Help

At times individuals may be unable to make their needs known to those around them.

This can be the result of the loss of his/her ability to speak because of a stroke or other medical problem, the result of a decline in brain functioning such as in certain dementias or a progressive illness such as Parkinson's Disease. Others may be unable to seek help because of physical limitations that reduce or prevent mobility.

Loss or decline in speech:

- If he/she has retained the ability to write, provide a hard backed pad of paper with a pen attached. Consider the larger pens now available with a padded grip for ease in holding. Make sure the pen glides smoothly. Look for a thicker point and use light colored paper, rather than white, to reduce glare.
- Make sure that regular appointments are made to check hearing and vision.
- Use picture cards to communicate needs – telephone, toilet, drink, food, hot, cold, happy, sad...(Make your own or look in teaching supply stores for things that might be adaptable.)
- The individual may be able to use a computer or a telephone designed for those who have speech or hearing problems. Talk to the telephone company and ask about available options.
- Use a personal monitoring service that provides for an alarm that can be worn and activated when there is an emergency to call a number for help.
- Provide a bell to alert others in the house that there is a need.

- Install simple buzzers in areas prone to accidents –bathroom, kitchen, garage, and basement...
- Use medical alert jewelry in the event he/she is away or the caregiver becomes incapacitated.

Dementia and other brain diseases

- When problems start, schedule frequent monitoring of his/her well being.
- Use community assistance to monitor an individual – postal workers, newspaper delivery persons, meals on wheel volunteers and others offer monitoring programs.
- Make sure fire and smoke alarms are functioning. Consider those with both audio and visual alerts.
- As a disease progresses, he/she may require 24-hour supervision if problem solving abilities decline.
- Ask simple, easy to answer questions. “Would you like a drink?” “Are you in pain?”
- Consider using monitors (such as those designed for infants) placed in frequently used rooms – bedroom, bathroom. Some transmit sound and others incorporate video.
- Monitor food and fluid intake, medications, weight, skin condition, bowel and bladder functioning to identify problems when they are starting rather than when it becomes an emergency.
- Use medical alert jewelry in the event he/she is away or the caregiver becomes incapacitated.