

# Providing a Peace of Mind

by Christine Eggers, owner of ATH

"He's gotten so big!" is a joyous part of celebrating the holidays with family. We shout it out when we first see our youngest family members to mark their growth and vitality. "She looks so frail," is the other side of that coin. We say it quietly, privately. Instead of being joyous, it's anxious because we see the people who protected us needing help and protection.



What do we see? Loose fitting clothes indicate weight loss. Weight loss has several possible causes: decreased appetite, inability to shop or prepare food, or an unknown illness. Stained clothes or wearing the same thing every day suggests difficulty doing laundry. The cause may be physical. Look for changes in mobility like needing help getting up from a chair, or shortness of breath after minimal effort. Other signs of poor hygiene include odors, and unkempt hair, hands, and nails. Physical barriers that prevent a person doing laundry, taking a shower, or even walking across the room don't usually prevent them washing hands, brushing teeth, or combing hair. It may be an early sign of dementia, or a late sign of depression.

What about the home environment? Is it as clean as expected? Are there obstacles that could cause falls? Is there expired food in the fridge or in the cupboards? Altogether these add up to deteriorating health.

Help with hygiene and housekeeping is a great start! Personal and supportive care workers assist with bathing, dressing, cleaning, shopping, and a whole host of tasks that need doing on a daily or weekly basis to help keep loved ones at home.

What can be done to address the health problems behind these changes? Check into private nursing services. A private nurse performs assessments to control chronic illnesses and prevent acute illnesses. The assessment is like a routine physical: taking vital signs, listening to heart, lungs, and abdomen, performing skin checks, and cognitive and functional assessments, and reviewing medications for effectiveness, side effects, and other issues. Over the age of 70, the majority of ER visits are related to medications. An RN works with her clients' doctors to change treatment, like medications, as needed to maintain health and prevent decline.

Navigating the health care system is another benefit of a private nurse. Starting with chaperoned clinic appointments, a private nurse is able to communicate between doctors and patients to the benefit of both. A nurse can initiate a referral to a specialist for timely care of a new health problem, and having the status of a nurse when calling the clinic speeds up care and treatment.

Several studies over decades have shown that RN care managers for people with chronic conditions improve overall health and health outcomes, and are a cost-effective way of slowing decline. Finally, a private nurse provides peace of mind that loved ones are well cared for and safe in their homes so that family may exclaim, "Doesn't she look great!" at the next holiday gathering.

Christine Eggers RN owns Appeal to Heaven LLC: Independent Nurses' Network.

## *Peace of mind* after the holidays

that your loved ones will be safe & well cared for at home.



## What can you do?

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