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7 Questions to Ask Regarding Signs of Alzheimer's

Through no fault of our own, we sometimes miss the signs of Alzheimer's and other dementias. Evaluate the person by using these questions as a starting point. Then, make sure they take the Mini-Memory State Exam (MMSE) and/or the Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA) tests followed by a visit to a dementia neurologist.

On a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 being "very poor or poorly" and 7 being "really sharp," rate the following signs of Alzheimer's and write the rating in the box. If they score below a 5 in any area, seek resources to help them in those areas and ask them to consult with their doctor.

- How is the person's short-term memory? For instance, do they ask the same question of you over and over again?
- What is their safety level in their current location? For instance, are there grab bars and railings? Evaluate everything from stairs and fall and trip hazards to leaving the stovetop on to walking out the door and getting lost.
- What is their ability to care for themselves, including showers, cooking, grocery shopping, housecleaning, taking out the garbage? How are their toileting skills (are they incontinent or soiling their clothes; check the dirty laundry)?
- How accurately are they taking their medications? Do they use a printed schedule or other tool? (This is their ability to take their medications as directed – they can overdose or underdose because they don't remember taking the medication.)

NOTE: Do you believe those pill organizers with the big letters MTWTFSS help keep the person on track with medications? Go ahead and ask them what day it is. If they don't know (and they may not), then do not count on those pill organizers!

- How is their ability to communicate and reason? Give them a common scenario (how to get to the grocery store or bank) and ask them how they would go about it.
- What's their level of stimulation? Do they get out and participate in activities and socialize daily?
- How clean and organized is the house or location where they live?

This is not a comprehensive list of what to look for when evaluating a person with signs of Alzheimer's but it's a good start when you're concerned about a person with any type of dementia.