

# Early Warning Signs Families Should Never Ignore

Early Warning Signs Families Should Never Ignore  
A Physician-Informed Guide for Observing Change at Home  
Elevé Home Care  
Elegant • Compassionate • Clinically Informed  
Serving Columbus and surrounding communities

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Trust Compassion

## INTRODUCTION

### Why Early Awareness Matters

Many serious health issues don't begin with dramatic symptoms. They begin quietly — with small changes that are easy to dismiss:

- “They just seem a little more tired.”
- “They're not quite themselves today.”
- “It's probably nothing.”

But early changes are often the body asking for attention.

This guide was created to help families recognize subtle warning signs early — so concerns can be addressed before they become emergencies.

At Elevé Home Care, our physician-led foundation emphasizes observation, communication, and prevention, because noticing early matters.

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AN IMPORTANT  
REMINDER FOR  
FAMILIES

This guide is not meant to alarm.

It is meant to empower.

You are not expected to diagnose or manage medical issues.

You are simply learning what changes are worth noticing and sharing.

If something feels different, it's worth paying attention to.

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## CHANGES IN MENTAL STATUS & COGNITION

### What to Watch For

- Increased confusion or disorientation
- Difficulty finding words or following conversation
- New forgetfulness or memory lapses
- Sudden changes in personality or behavior
- Increased agitation, anxiety, or withdrawal
- Excessive sleepiness or difficulty staying awake

### Why This Matters

Changes in cognition can signal:

- Infection
- Medication side effects
- Dehydration
- Metabolic changes
- Neurological events

Sudden changes should never be ignored.

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## CHANGES IN MOBILITY & FUNCTION

### What to Watch For

- Increased difficulty standing or walking
- Slower movement or shuffling gait
- New balance issues or frequent near-falls
- Increased reliance on furniture or walls for support
- Difficulty transferring from bed or chair
- Hesitation or fear of moving

### Why This Matters

Functional decline increases:

- Fall risk
- Loss of independence
- Hospitalization risk

Early support can often prevent injuries and complications.

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## BREATHING, CIRCULATION & SWELLING

### What to Watch For

- Shortness of breath at rest or with minimal activity
- New or worsening swelling in legs, ankles, or feet
- Chest discomfort or pressure
- Bluish lips or fingertips
- Fatigue out of proportion to activity

### Why This Matters

These symptoms may be associated with:

- Heart or lung conditions
- Fluid retention
- Infection
- Medication effects

Changes in breathing or swelling should be communicated promptly.

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## APPETITE, HYDRATION & ELIMINATION

### What to Watch For

- Decreased appetite or skipped meals
- Weight loss or gain
- Reduced fluid intake
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Changes in urination (frequency, color, odor)
- Signs of dehydration (dry mouth, dark urine)

### Why This Matters

Nutrition and hydration affect:

- Strength
- Cognition
- Healing
- Medication tolerance

Small changes can have significant impact over time.

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## EMOTIONAL & BEHAVIORAL CHANGES

### What to Watch For

- Withdrawal from activities or conversation
- Increased sadness or tearfulness
- Anxiety or fearfulness
- Loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities
- Changes in sleep patterns

### Why This Matters

Emotional well-being is deeply connected to physical health.

Isolation, depression, and anxiety often accompany functional decline and deserve attention, not dismissal.

WHEN TO ACT  
IMMEDIATELY

Seek Immediate Help If You Notice:

Sudden confusion or inability to speak

Chest pain or severe shortness of breath

Unresponsiveness or fainting

Signs of stroke (face drooping, arm weakness, speech difficulty)

Severe falls or injuries

In these situations, call 911 immediately.

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HOW ELEVÉ HOME  
CARE SUPPORTS EARLY  
AWARENESS

At Elevé, our caregivers are trained to:

- Observe subtle changes
- Document accurately
- Communicate promptly
- Escalate concerns appropriately
- Partner with families and clinicians

We act as:

A second set of trained eyes

A safety net between doctor visits

A source of reassurance and clarity

This proactive approach reflects our physician-led foundation and commitment to thorough care.

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A NOTE TO  
FAMILIES

Noticing change is not being anxious.

Speaking up is not overreacting.

Early awareness allows families to act before small changes become big problems.

If you ever have questions, concerns, or simply need guidance, Elev  Home Care is here, to listen, observe, and support.

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