

Supporting Individuals aging with IDD

While living longer overall than in years past, people with IDD are also more likely to develop age-related diseases at earlier stages than their non-disabled peers. This means that you may notice aging typically associated with a person in their 70s or 80s as early as their 40s or 50s in a person with IDD. Here are some things to know, things to look for, and tips to help people with IDD who are aging.

Things to Know and Look for:

- People with IDD are more likely than other adults to develop **Dementia or Alzheimer's Disease**, and can develop it at a younger age. Changes that you may notice include personality and behavior changes.
- People with IDD may develop **depression** as they age. Changes to look for include a lack of motivation, poor appetite, and difficulty concentrating.
- **Delirium**, or a sudden state of confusion, may also be present in the aging IDD population. Delirium is different than dementia, as it comes on rapidly, and may be a sign of another health issue.
- As they age, people with IDD may have an even **higher risk of falls** than other older adults. This is often due to issues (*such as balance, reflex, and vision*) that they may already face if their disability already impacts those areas of physical ability.



- Along with falls, people with IDD may face an increased risk of injury to their bones, as they are more prone to **fractures and osteoporosis**.

- **Eye and vision** problems, as well as hearing problems, may increase as people age. Skin care becomes more important, too.

How to Help:

- Keep yearly eye exams, hearing assessments, dental visits, and foot care.

Keep track of cognitive changes.

You can use the NTG tool (<https://www.the-ntg.org/ntg-edsd>) to note these changes and take to your next medical visit. Pay attention if memory or thinking ability changes suddenly.

- Help keep track of bladder and bowel habits, and note any changes to the doctor.
- Check the home for fall and trip hazards. Make sure there are handrails, well-lit spaces, dry floors, and comfortable shoes.
- Encourage good sleep.
- Keep track of medication changes.

Spend time with the person! Knowing a person well is the **BEST** way to notice changes, and also to help a person feel *safe, loved, and important.*



Compiled by Suzanne Byers, TVS Program Manager

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