

PERSONAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE SYSTEMS

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Personal emergency response systems (PERS), also known as **medical alert systems**, can be lifesavers for persons who are risk of falling or having a medical emergency. Each system is different, but most consist of a button that can be worn as a pendant around the neck or on a wristband. Pressing the button sends a signal to a monitoring center; the monitor contacts designated responders (family members, neighbors, 911) as needed, and maintains contact with the subscriber until help arrives. Some systems are unmonitored.

Landline services is traditional, but many companies now offer cellular service (for those without a landline), or even mobile capabilities (allowing use outside of the home). Some systems offer add-on features, such as automatic fall detection or medication reminder calls.

Costs vary widely, from \$20-\$50 per month for monitoring and \$0-\$100 for initial installation, with some additional feeds possible. **These services are typically not covered by Medicare or other insurance.**

Here are some things to consider when looking into options:

Services

Make sure you are getting what you want, and not more than you need.

- Do you want a purely home-based system or a mobile system?
- For home-based systems: what is the range of connectivity?
- Do you want a monitored system (where activation connects the subscriber to a 24/7 response center) or unmonitored system (typically lower-cost, but only contacts certain pre-programmed numbers)?
- For monitored systems: What is the average response time? This should be seconds, not minutes. Is the response center certified?
- What other services do you want the system to provide, if any (fall detection; medication reminders)?

Costs

- For wearable devices: is it waterproof (can it be worn in the shower/bath)?

Beware of complicated plans and hidden charges.

- Is there an installation or activation fee?
- Is there an equipment fee?
- What is the monthly or ongoing fee?
- Is a contract required? If so, what is the minimum length?
- What are the details of the return policy? Is there a cancellation fee?
- Are any discounts available?

Sources:

- www.aarp.org
- www.agingplace.org/technology
- www.consumerreports.org
- www.inhomessafetyguide.org

Inclusion in this list does not constitute a recommendation by Resources for Seniors. Compare cost and services prior to purchasing a device or signing a contract.

Consumer reports (www.consumerreports.org) and InHomeSafety (www.inhomesafetyguide.org) offer reviews of many national options

Connect America..... 200.215.4205
www.connectamerica.com

Offers multiple monitored systems, including landline, cellular, and mobile options. Also offers a pendant with fall detection.

- *Often offers FREE activation and AARP discounts.*
- *Some Medicare plans contract with them.*

HELP Service Personal Response System..... 866.672.4852
www.helpforyou.com

Offers monitored system for emergency and non-emergency use, with landline, cellular, and mobile option. Also offers a medication dispenser.

- *May be covered under Medicaid Waiver Program.*

LifeStation..... 800.446.3300
www.lifestation.com

Offers multiple monitored systems, including landline and mobile options with fall detection.

- *Frequent offers online (10-20% off).*

LogicMark..... 800.519.2419
www.logicmark.com

Offers monitored and unmonitored options. Unmonitored devices include **Guardian Alert 911** (calls 911 only) and **Freedom Alert** (calls 911 and up to 4 other preprogrammed numbers)—these are available at some local pharmacies, or can be purchased from LogicMark.

- *No Monthly fee on devices.*
- *Not covered by insurance.*

Mobile Help..... 800 809.9664 or 800.992.0616
www.mobilehelp.com

Offers multiple monitored systems, including landline, cellular, and mobile options. Also offers medication reminder and fall detection.

- *Offers AARP discounts and free equipment with annual plans.*
- *Some Medicare Advantage plans reimburse Mobile Help.*

Lifeline..... 855.681.5351

www.lifeline.com

Offers multiple monitored systems, including landline, cellular, and mobile options. Fall detection is included.

- *Some Medicare Advantage plans cover Lifeline*

Life Alert..... 1-800-814-1030

www.lifealert.com

Offers multiple monitored systems, including medical alert devices, micro voice pendant, help button, and help on-the-go+GPS

- *Rarely offers discounts*
- *Not covered by insurance*