Peace of Mind with Your Older Loved One

We received the call last month, my ninety-two-year old Uncle James had fallen in his home in Tulsa. Because James had a personal emergency response system, emergency medical personnel arrived quickly.

Falls are the leading cause of injury and death in older adults according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

A CDC study also found that one out of three Americans 65 and older fall at least once a year. And, falls happen most often in one’s own home. The inability to get up without help is common among older people who live alone.

Having a personal communication system that offers outside contact and rapid response in an emergency can give you and your older relative some peace of mind—and may make the difference between life and death.

Most experts in the field suggest you seek an emergency response system with two primary features: Simple and clear, loud communication.

Here are some things to consider when subscribing to a home personal emergency response system:

- Compare prices and features.
- Talk to other who have the system. Ask them what they like and don’t like about the system.
- Look for a transmitter that lets you know if the battery is getting low.
- Is the transmitter waterproof? Many falls happen in the bathroom.
- Make sure the monitoring center is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Find out what procedures are followed in the case of a medical emergency.
- Make sure everyone in your family as well as your relative’s close friends or neighbors are aware of the system after you get it, if they might be contacted by the system provider in an emergency or during a test of the system.
- Find out if your older relative’s insurance plan or Medicaid program will pay for a system on a medical doctor’s recommendation.
- Ask about contract terms. Is there is a contract, installation fee and the monthly rates? Is there a warranty on the equipment?

This list will get you started on the road to keep yourself or your loved one safer. You will have other decisions to make such as how the transmitter is worn; as a pendant, wristband or on a belt. Some models can be fitted with sensors that can detect a fall.
While the personal emergency response systems on the market function similarly, their costs and terms of use tend to vary widely. So, it’s important to carefully consider the options. Your local senior center, hospital and physician are good places to begin asking about systems and options.

My Uncle James was hospitalized and is now back home thanks to his rapid response system. Being prepared with a response system can be a lifesaver.

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