

# The Top Ten Tips Regarding Home Medical Alarms

Sanford Freed, President, SafeCall Inc.

The ability for a senior citizen to live at home as their health declines depends upon caregivers, usually from the immediate family. Additionally, newer technologies help the caregiver to maintain a safety net around their loved one. Home medical alarms are quickly becoming indispensable to an aging senior's independence.

1. A fall is the critical incident which begins the decline of an elder's independence. The time spent on the ground may actually determine the severity of the fall's effects. A Personal Emergency Response Service, also called a help button, greatly reduces the time spent waiting for someone to come and help you.
2. Seniors take an average of 13 different medications daily. Confusion can easily lead to medication errors or non-compliance. Many seniors lose their independence by not accurately following their medication regimen. When confusion and/or memory issues contribute to medication non-compliance, an automated medication dispenser will help to keep elders independent. These devices secure the medications and deliver the right dose at the right time.
3. Caregivers receive peace of mind and reassurance when a help button is installed in a loved ones' home. They know that a caring responder can be contacted within seconds of the help button being activated.
4. Plastic medication organizers don't protect a disoriented elder from medication non-compliance. A quality automated med dispenser has a secure lock that keeps the med doses tamper-free. And a battery backup keeps the dispenser working during power outages.
5. The Internet is changing home care. Family members can see if Mom needs reminders to take her medication or if Dad needed the neighbor to help him up the other day, by accessing secure online reports from their home medical alarms.
6. The stress from not having a restful night's sleep increases the intensity of caring for a dementia sufferer. Caregivers 'sleep with one eye open' in case the dementia sufferer wanders, which is more likely in the evening hours. A wander alarm can alert the caregiver that their loved one is leaving a room or opening a door. These alarms are set to alert caregivers if an outside door is opened or if a pressure-sensitive floor pad is stepped on.
7. A help button system works best if the responder information is current. Ask your provider how often your response information is updated.
8. Moving quickly to stand in order to answer a phone call can cause an elder to fall. A help button can be used to answer the telephone – remotely. The button is pushed to answer the call. The caller is greeted and a conversation is started by speaking through the speakerphone, which picks up sound around the home. Then the elder can stand up to get to the phone, slowly and carefully.
9. Wander alarms can alert a caregiver in the home or contact a response center operator who can alert others. Consumers should find out who will be contacted by any system they are

considering. Help buttons and wander alarms must dial into a staffed response center in order for an ambulance to be dispatched.

10. Elders may argue that they don't need a home medical alarm. Often they are afraid that it means they are losing their independence. The truth is that these alarms assist elders in retaining their independence just like using a walker, potty seat, shower bars and other home medical equipment maintains independence, not diminishes it.

The tools of home care are no longer limited to the caring nurse or home health aide. Those strong components have been strengthened even more with devices that communicate a variety of needs. Home medical alarms are the important tools that assist the caregivers to keep their loved ones in their home.

In the Grand Rapids area you can find these products through these sources:

Gentiva Home Care (942-5744) and Gerontology Network (456-6135) provide help button service.

SafeCall (365-8618) provides help button service, automated medication dispensing and wander alarms.

Provided as a public service of the Caregiver Resource Network. The **Caregiver Resource Network** is a collaboration of Kent County organizations dedicated to providing for the needs and welfare of family and professional caregivers within the community. Funded by the Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan with Older American's Act Title III-E, Family Caregiver Support funds. For more information consult our website at [www.CaregiverResource.net](http://www.CaregiverResource.net) or call toll free at 1-888-456-5664.