



## **Choosing Medical Alert Systems**

Choosing a medical alert system is an important decision. No matter what medical alert company you decide to go with, make sure that you get the answers to these questions before you sign up.

## **Monitoring Center Considerations**

### **Does your medical alert systems company operate its own monitoring center?**

Medical alert systems are only as good as the monitoring centers behind them. Many smaller providers outsource their monitoring. This means that they have no control over the quality of care that you and your loved ones will receive.

If you want the management team of your medical alert company to be fully accountable for the service that you and your loved ones receive, find a company that owns its own monitoring center.

### **Is the monitoring center UL Listed?**

Underwriters Laboratories has been writing standards for safety for more than a century. A UL certification is the globally-acknowledged gold standard for safety and reliability. For the true peace of mind that you are paying for, make sure that the monitoring center has been certified from this leader in independent standards verification. Don't simply rely on a for-profit medical alert company to decide that its monitoring is adequate.

### **What happens when emergency services or friends and family need to be contacted?**

When you or your loved one has an emergency, it can be very lonely and scary waiting for help to arrive. That's why your medical alert company should have two operators handle each emergency call. One operator stays on the line and reassures the person in need, while the second operator notifies EMS or the emergency contact list.

### **Do calls for help go to a monitoring center or directly to emergency services?**

You may be tempted by services that call directly to 911 instead of contacting a monitoring center. The reality, however, is that a monitoring center can help ensure that the right people provide aid. Many calls for assistance are better handled by having the monitoring center contact the friends and family on your emergency contact list, rather than involving emergency personnel. Overuse of 911 services has caused many municipalities to de-emphasize or even prohibit emergency calls from medical alert systems that are not routed through a monitoring center.

## **Cost and Contract Details**

### **What is the cancellation policy?**

You never know when you may no longer need your medical alert service. The last thing that you want to have to worry about during a stressful and complicated time is what the cancellation terms are for your medical alert system. Only sign up with a medical alert company that lets you cancel the service at any time without penalties or return shipping costs.



## **What are the minimum payment requirements?**

Despite the best efforts of caregivers, there are some seniors who just “aren't ready” for medical alert systems and seek to send them back before they ever take them out of the box. Even some medical alert companies that advertise no long-term contracts have 3-6 month pre-payment requirements. You should never have to pay for your medical alert system after it has been returned to the company.

## **Does it cost around \$1 per day?**

Medical alert systems typically cost between \$25 and \$30 per month. Anything less and you are putting your trust in a company that can't possibly afford to stay in business without cutting corners. Anything more and you are getting overcharged and are paying to support expensive marketing budgets and celebrity endorsements.

## **Are there costs in addition to the monthly monitoring fee?**

In addition to a monthly monitoring fee, some medical alert companies charge upfront fees for shipping, installation or the purchase or rent of your medical alert console. There is no reason to pay any of these fees. There are plenty of reputable medical alert companies that offer free shipping with no upfront payments; the only cost being the monthly monitoring fee. As for installation, setting up your medical alert system is as easy as plugging in an answering machine and does not require any professional setup.

## **Service and Reliability**

### **What is the corporate history of the medical alert company?**

In an industry where experience matters, you don't want a company that is new to medical alert monitoring. Plus, as with any other service, check with the Better Business Bureau (BBB) and look for past issues with customers. A great way to do this is to search for the name of the company and the word “complaints”.

### **What are the customer service and technical support hours?**

In addition to needing 24/7 monitoring, you want to have access to customer service and technical support whenever you might need it, so make sure to ask if the medical alert company also has a 24/7 customer support line. Don't accept a company that has limited customer service hours.

### **How reliable is the medical alert equipment?**

While there are lots of times when you might want to try out cutting-edge technology, a system designed to safeguard your life or the life of a loved one should be tested and proven reliable. Make sure that the unit is UL certified for safety and that the medical alert company provides free repair or replacement, if necessary.

### **How often do the help button's batteries need to be charged or replaced?**

You or your loved one should never have to worry that the medical alert system's help button does not have enough power to transmit a call for assistance. Ideally the button's battery will last long enough that the user never has to change or recharge it. Some medical alert system batteries only last a few months while others last several years. If the battery does run low, it should clearly



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notify the user and the medical alert system's monitoring center so that it can be replaced before the help button stops functioning properly.