

NETWORK Lifeline

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May: Older Americans Month – Safety at Home

“Help! I’ve fallen and I can’t get up!” We all remember this phrase and each of us prays that we will never have to use it. With baby boomers beginning to celebrate their 65th birthdays this year and each day for the next 20 years, 10,000 people will turn 65; senior safety within the home is necessary, vital, and lifesaving. For most seniors, when asked how they want to age, the majority say they want to stay in their home and want to be independent for as long as possible.

Installing grab bars in the showers; using an extended tub bench or raised toilet seat; use of night lights; lift chairs; and removing throw rugs and clutter are some easy and affordable ways to decrease the risk of falls. Using a caregiver to carry groceries, do the laundry, make meals, or provide the housecleaning reduces the risk of falls, while maintaining independence. It is important to check with your insurance companies to see the medical services are covered.

One of the most important safety features that seniors should consider having is a medical alert button. These pendants or wrist style buttons summon help immediately, connecting the senior to a 24/7 response center. An associate communicates directly with the senior and assesses the situation, contacting a family member or emergency services based upon the senior’s needs. One medical alert system, Auto Alert, has a feature that **automatically** places a call for help when a fall occurs and the senior is unable to press the button because of injury, loss of consciousness, or disorientation. This feature gets help at once; provides peace of mind for the user and the family; is lightweight and waterproof; and increases overall response time, providing help and assistance almost instantaneously. An average cost for a medical alert system is about \$40 per month and there are some programs available to for those on fixed or low incomes. Use of equipment is a month-to-month rental.

Philips Lifeline has helped more than 6 million people for over 30 years maintain independent living through Lifeline medical alert buttons and other senior safety products, offers the following information when choosing a medical alert button. Research the company. How long have they been in business and what is their reputation and response time? Check to make the button is water-resistant and can be submerged 100% in water; if the button automatically detects a fall. What are the installation procedures? How fast will it be installed and will it be mailed or installed by a professional? Does the monthly cost cover any repairs on the button or communicator, are there any hidden fees, and is the monthly rate fixed? Other things to consider are if the service portable, ease of use for people with arthritis, and the company’s ability to communicate effectively with the senior, their family, and healthcare professionals.

Preparing for the future by problem-solving challenges before they arise can assist seniors in remaining safe and independent. Simple services like the use of the medical alert button or use of a caregiver to provide companionship, care, transportation, or home helper services reduces the fear of “being a burden” to one’s family, reduces the fear of being alone, and provides peace of mind to family.

Philips LIFELINE, the largest Medical Alert Button program in Western Pa. delivers extraordinary service to nine counties and offers the cutting-edge **Auto Alert** -- which automatically detects falls, provides peace of mind and assists people with living independently longer. Contact Bob Gordon at 412-779-0696 or Toll Free 866-677-7795.