

Can You Get Help?

Personal Emergency Response Systems (PERS)

For older adults living alone in their own homes or apartments, the ability to get medical attention when it is needed is important. Knowing you can get help quickly when you need it is reassuring for both you and your family. Emergency alert response systems can supply this reliable service.

The systems all have a portable alert button that can be worn on a pendant or wrist, which lets you call for help if you can't reach the telephone. Some systems call a person you pay to monitor your system, who then calls you, your family, or emergency services. Others dial several numbers you choose automatically, starting with yours (to be sure it's not a mistake) and ending with emergency services.

Tips for Choosing a System

Here are some tips for finding the best options available to you:

- Check with your local hospital for the names of reputable vendors. In many areas, one hospital is identified as the Personal Emergency Alert Response location and offers reasonably priced services.
- Talk to friends who have experience with these devices.
- Shop around for services and price. As in any consumer area, some vendors overcharge or offer poor quality devices and service.
- Watch out for high initial cost, long-term contracts, and short warranties.

**Information
Sources**

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC), in cooperation with the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), publishes a Web site with general information about how PERS work and what to consider when shopping for one.

Web site: <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/pubs/services/pers.htm>

Telephone: (877) 382-4357

The MedicAlert Foundation is another good source of information about PERS and available products and services.

Web site: <http://www.medicalert.org>

Telephone: (800) 633-4298