



Need help finding the right advice, services and support?

**Free call: 1800 422 737**

For support and advice, Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm.

**Is it an emergency? Dial triple zero (000)**

If you need urgent medical help, call triple zero (000) immediately.



## Alarms and monitoring

Alarms and monitors can make it safer and easier for people to manage if they are elderly or have a disability or chronic disease. It's important, however, to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages before you purchase an alarm or monitor for the person you care for.

### What are alarms and monitors?

New technology is making it safer and easier for people to manage independently. Alarms and monitors transfer information quickly to carers and health professionals about a person's health or if there is an emergency.

**Alarms** send an alert in an emergency situation. For example, the person you care for could have a smoke alarm; an emergency response system or alarm in case they feel unwell; a mobile

phone alarm to remind them when to take their pills; or a personal alarm in case something happens to them when they go outside.

Some examples of the alarms that are available include:

- emergency call systems to summon help in an emergency
- hand-held alarms
- one-way alerting devices
- intercom systems
- telephone-based emergency systems that send a message from a transmitter to someone else's mobile phone
- 24-hour monitoring systems, staffed by trained personnel
- fall detectors
- alarms in the home to alert the person to emergencies, such as smoke, intruders or floods

You can also arrange to receive a free service from the [Red Cross](#)  where a volunteer calls at a regular time each day or week to check on a person who requires care. [Telstra](#)  has a hotline that dials a pre-arranged number by lifting the receiver and waiting 4 seconds.

**Monitors** track people's location or health status and send information to carers or health professionals. For example, the person you care for may have a GPS tracker or mobile phone app so you can find them if they wander and forget where they are. Remote monitoring can also use a mobile device to carry out routine tests such as blood pressure or blood glucose levels. The results are then sent to a doctor or healthcare professional for their review.

Some examples of the monitors that are available include:

- daily monitoring devices for people with diabetes or heart conditions
- epilepsy sensors, to alert someone if the cared-for person has a seizure while asleep
- falls monitors
- locating devices
- wandering and movement monitors

## Which one is right for me?

Many of the difficulties faced by people who need care can be overcome by using technology that includes alarms and monitors. The person's needs will depend on their abilities, what tasks they are trying to do, the environment they live in, and what solutions are available where they live.

However, it's important to think about the disadvantages too. How much will the alarm or monitor cost to buy, rent or install, and what will be the costs over time.

Think about what you are trying to achieve for the person you care for, what they really need, and what they could live without. Consider how usable they would find the device to be; how complex it is; whether it's reliable; and whether the person likes the idea of having it. It's a good idea to trial several different devices so you can compare them before you decide.

## Issues to consider

**Electricity supply:** If you depend on medical equipment that needs an electricity supply, register as a life support customer with your energy company so they will give you warning if your energy supply is going to be cut off. It's always important to have a back-up plan.

**Phone and internet:** Many alarms and monitors rely on transmitting data via the internet or phone. If you are an NBN customer, the internet won't work if there is a power outage. You could consider registering with your internet service provider for medical priority assistance, or have an alternative phone such as a mobile phone, traditional landline or battery back-up.

Internet and phone access is still not available to everyone in rural and remote areas of Australia. For more information on what devices are suitable in the area where the person you care for lives, [contact Independent Living Centres](#)  in your state or territory or call 1300 885 886.

**Upgrading the equipment:** Set a date to assess whether the device is still suitable for the person you care for. It may need to be upgraded or replaced as new technology comes onto the market or the person's needs change.

**Maintaining the equipment:** It is important to consider who is responsible for continuing maintenance and the repair costs for the equipment. Is maintenance included if you rent the equipment? Agree on this first and write it down.

**Insurance:** You should consider insuring electronic and powered devices.

## Subsidies and support

There is no single place to get funding support for alarms and monitors, and there may not be any funding available for your specific needs. Contact your healthcare provider or your local [Independent Living Centre](#)  for advice.

Elderly people may be entitled to help with buying or renting aids and equipment through their Home Care Package. Contact [myagedcare](#)  on 1800 200 422 for more information.

The [Commonwealth Home Support Programme](#)  for older people may offer funding for home modification, including alarms and monitoring.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) may provide some funding for equipment for people with disability. For more information, visit the [NDIS website](#)  or call 1800 800 110.

---

**Sources:** [Independent Living Centres - \(Making Choices, Finding Solutions\)](#) , [Royal Australian College of General Practitioners - \(Remote monitoring devices\)](#) , [Independent Living Centres - \(Security at home\)](#) , [Independent Living Centres - \(Activity monitors and alarms\)](#) , [LifeTec - \(LifeTec guide to selecting and using assistive technology\)](#) , [Australian Energy Regulator - \(Energy and essential medical equipment\)](#) , [Australian Medical Association - \(Better access to high speed broadband for rural and remote health care\)](#) , [Independent Living Centres - \(Funding support\)](#) , [Telstra - \(Broadband NBN\)](#) 

**Last reviewed:** February 2018

**ID:** C11915

---

This information is provided subject to the Carer Gateway terms of use, accessible via the Terms of use and Disclaimer links of the Carer Gateway Website at <https://www.carergateway.gov.au/terms-of-use#disclaimer> 

This information is for your general information and use only and is not intended to be used as medical advice and should not be used to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any medical condition, nor should it be used for therapeutic purposes.

The information is not a substitute for independent professional advice and should not be used as an alternative to professional health care. If you have a medical problem, please consult a healthcare professional.

---