

A Guide to Selecting Personal Alarms



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Assistive technology (AT) is a piece of equipment, device or system that provides people with practical solutions to everyday life activities. You can search our National Equipment Database www.askned.com.au to view a range of products online.

A personal alarm call system is a safety device that will call for assistance in an emergency such as fall or medical emergency. The information below may help in selecting the system that is right for you.

Basic types of alarms

Non-monitored

These alarm systems respond by dialling pre-set phone numbers that are programmed into the system. If the first phone number dialled is not answered, the unit continues to dial the next phone number and so on. This type of alarm relies on the user having a network of people who they can call on for assistance in an emergency (e.g., family, friends, neighbour).

Monitored

These alarm systems respond by dialling a 24-hour monitoring service. The monitoring centre will follow a plan designed by the user and will have personal details and some medical history on file. This information can be passed onto emergency services or support people as required. These systems have ongoing monitoring fees.

Where can I use my personal alarm?

Home-based

These alarms consist of a base station, which will be connected to mains power and a pendant. They are designed to be used at home only and typically will only work within 50m of the base station. When the pendant is activated, the base station automatically calls the contact/s, and the user can communicate via the base station. If the user is likely to need assistance outside of their home, then a community-based personal alarm is recommended.

Community-based

These alarms are self-contained devices, which means that all communication and technology is contained within the pendant or watch. When the pendant is activated, the user can have a 2-way conversation through the device. This means they can be used both at home and in the community (anywhere that has adequate mobile phone reception). These alarms require ongoing charging.

Options for wearing personal alarm

You need to be wearing your personal alarm to access help in an emergency. Consider the size, weight and design of the device.

Wearing the device around your neck is recommended when using the falls detection feature. Some devices have the option to wear on a wrist strap, on a belt clip or there are watch-based options available.



Features

Automatic falls detection

Some alarms have sensors that aim to detect if a person has fallen over and will automatically send an alert to the emergency contacts.

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Water resistance

Most personal alarms are water resistant and can be worn whilst showering. They should NOT be submerged in water and should also be kept clean from any soap/shampoo residue.

Range

Most home-based systems have a range of approximately 50m from the base unit. Systems using a mobile phone network will vary due to network coverage.

GPS Location

Most community-based alarms include GPS. On these devices, when activated the alarm will send its location to the programmed emergency contacts via text message.

What alternatives are available?

There are other devices which have features that can be used to monitor someone's safety. These include:

- Smartwatch with call capability and GPS tracking.
- Simple mobile phone with SOS function.
- Personal tracking device.
- Smartphone with location tracking app downloaded.

Important considerations

- How will assistance (e.g. Paramedics) enter your home in an emergency? You may need to consider a key safe, this is a coded box that securely stores a key to your home.
- For users with a pacemaker or any other body-worn medical device, it is recommended to seek advice from a Cardiologist or Specialist prior to using a personal alarm, as many personal alarms contain magnets, which may affect some medical devices if worn within 20cm of the device.

- Calls from automated devices cannot guarantee a response from emergency services.
- It is recommended that you test your equipment regularly to ensure it is functioning.
- A practise call once a month is advised.
- Some devices require regular charging and need mobile phone coverage to work.

Find out more about a wide range of helpful products and devices on NED, our National Equipment Database at askned.com.au.

Need help with NED?

Call our helpline on 1300 885 886.

Our experienced health professionals can also assist in providing strategies and advice on finding and using the right product for you.

Call us on 9381 0600 or complete an appointment request form via our website at www.indigo.org.au

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