

Free Medical Alert Systems for Veterans

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As individuals age, they experience physical and cognitive changes that increase their chances of accidents, such as falls. If you have an elderly relative who lives alone, it's natural to be concerned about their safety, particularly if they must navigate narrow walkways or use stairs frequently.

Your concern isn't misplaced, either. Approximately 36 million older adults suffer falls each year, sending around three million of them to the emergency department for care. Falls are also responsible for more than 95% of hip fractures, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. If your loved one falls once, they have an increased risk of falling again, resulting in an even higher risk of injury or death.

If you want to ensure the safety of your elderly loved ones, consider purchasing a medical alert system. This device can connect the user with their family members and first responders in an emergency. Whether it's a fall or sudden chest pain, medical alert systems can quickly summon paramedics, police officers, or firefighters, making them an essential and potentially life-saving addition to any senior's home.

The following guide provides an overview of medical alert systems available through the Department of Veterans Affairs, outlines the eligibility guidelines for these systems and explains other ways to obtain a medical alert system if your loved one doesn't qualify for one provided by the VA. It also includes a directory of Medicaid waiver programs that may cover the cost of purchasing a medical alert system.

Free Medical Alert Systems From the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

If your loved one served in the U.S. military, they may qualify for a free medical alert system through the Department of Veterans Affairs. The VA provides funding, while its two partner companies provide the devices.

Latitude USA

Latitude USA offers a basic alert system that allows users to program up to six personal contacts. If the user pushes the help button on the waterproof pendant, Latitude USA sends a text message to every person on the list. The text includes the user's GPS coordinates, making it easy for whoever responds to find them quickly. After sending text messages, the device calls each contact until someone answers. Once the call is connected, the user and their personal contact can communicate via a two-way speaker.

Latitude USA's device doesn't come with 24/7 monitoring, but it does make it possible to get help at the touch of a button, making it a good choice for veterans who are fairly independent but want a little extra peace of mind. Your loved one can even include 911 as one of their six contacts, reducing the amount of time it takes to get emergency assistance.

MedEquip Alert

The MedEquip Alert system is more robust than Latitude USA's pendant, as it offers 24/7 monitoring. Whenever the user presses the help button, a trained live operator immediately responds, reducing the time required to get help from medical personnel, firefighters, police officers, or family members. Once the device is set up, it will automatically connect to the monitoring center, ensuring the alert system is always ready.

The MedEquip Alert devices are equipped with AT&T-certified cellular and GPS antennas, which provide nationwide coverage for veterans. These devices are designed to be user-friendly, even for veterans with arthritis and other medical conditions that may cause weakness or pain in the muscles and joints. To connect with a trained operator, the user must press and hold the help button for 2 seconds.

Qualifying for a Free Medical Alert System From the VA



To qualify for a free medical alert system from the VA, a veteran must have an increased risk of falls or a medical condition that increases the risk of emergencies. To apply for a Latitude USA or MedEquip Alert device, you or your loved one should follow this process:

- Schedule an appointment with a VA health care provider.
- During the appointment, let the provider know if there's an increased risk of falls or other emergencies.
- If the provider believes that a personal emergency response system would be helpful, they can issue a written request.
- Assuming the request is approved, the VA sends a purchase order to Latitude USA or MedEquip Alert.
- The partner company will contact you or your loved one to arrange delivery.

Additional Help for Veterans in Need of Medical Alert Systems

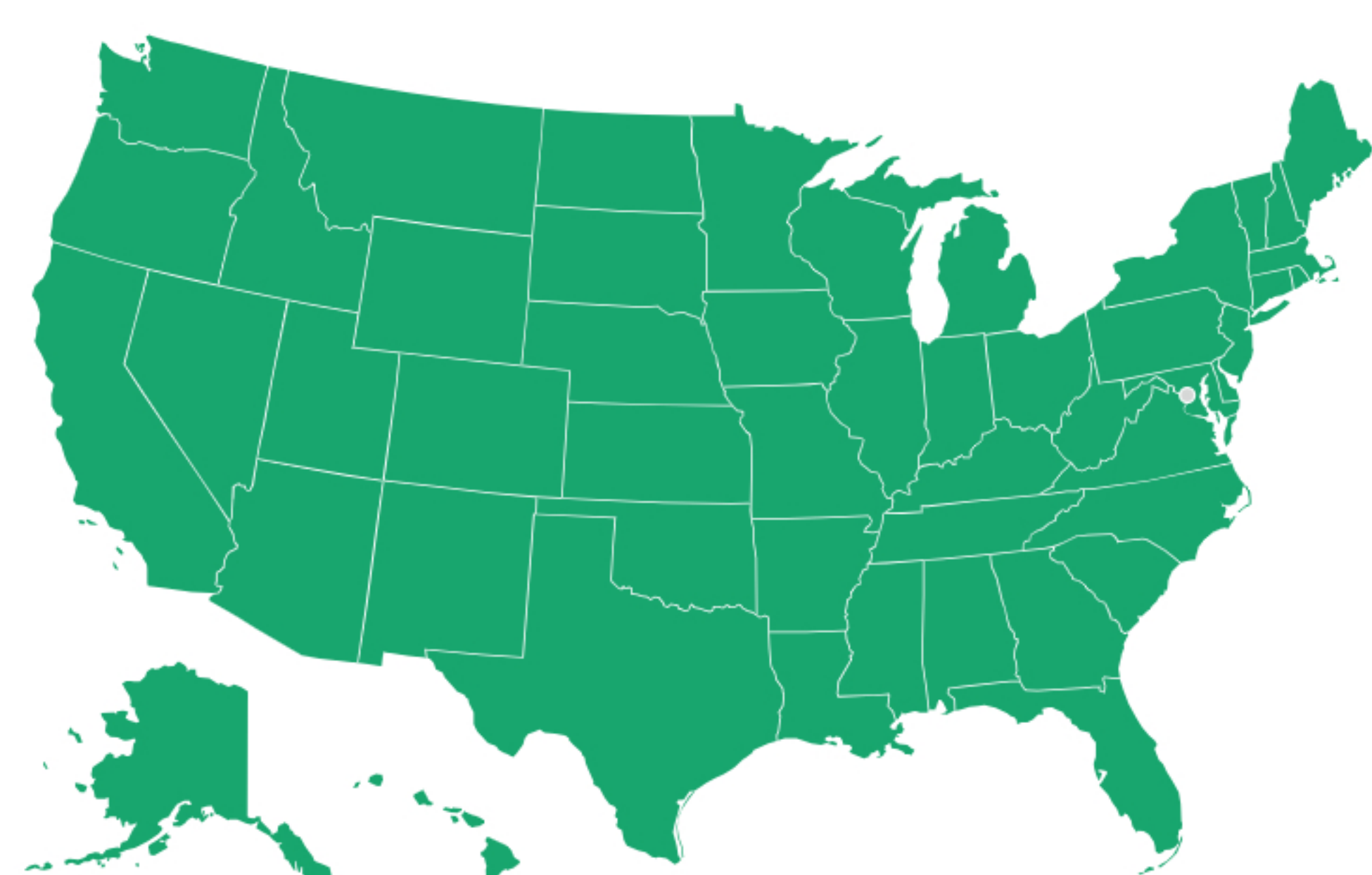
Even if you don't qualify for the Latitude USA or MedEquip device, you may be able to use VA funds to pay for fall-detection devices and other items that make it easier to get help in an emergency. Note that even if the VA covers the device, it may not pay for 24/7 monitoring.

Other Options for Getting a Free or Low-Cost Medical Alert System

OPTION	CONTACT	MORE INFORMATION
Private health insurance companies	Check the back of the insurance ID card for the insurer's contact information.	Private insurance companies may cover the cost of personal emergency response systems to make it easier for subscribers to get help when they need it.
Medicare Advantage	Call the telephone number on the back of the Medicare Advantage card to reach a plan representative.	Original Medicare doesn't cover emergency alert devices, but some Medicare Advantage Plans do. These plans are offered by private insurance companies, so they often cover extra benefits.
Long-term care insurance providers	If you have long-term care insurance, call the telephone number listed in the policy documents.	Coverage varies by plan, but some LTC plans do cover the cost of personal alert systems.
AARP	(855)-345 0130	AARP has partnered with Philips Lifeline to offer discounts on medical alert systems.

Free Medical Alert Systems: A State-by-State Guide

Most states have Medicaid waivers available to help enrollees pay for assistive technology. Although many of these waiver programs cover the cost of medical alert systems, they have stringent eligibility requirements. Check with your state Medicaid office to determine if you or your loved one qualifies.



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