



## Caregiver Tip of the Month – February 2011

Notes from Area Agency on Aging of North Idaho

Alone but able to get immediate help!

PERS (**P**ersonal **E**mergency **R**esponse **S**ystems), sometimes called a medical alert is activated by a push of a button and in some cases, even detects a fall. It initiates contact with a monitoring center, which then contacts appropriate emergency personnel, or notifies a family member, or a neighbor. An elderly or disabled person or couple, living alone, can feel more secure and safe in their homes, and it can give added peace of mind for their family members.

PERS usually is installed for under \$100, but often for free or reduced cost for those on limited income. There is a monthly charge usually between \$30-\$50. Devices are worn around the neck, as a bracelet or as a belt clip. The installer trains on the use of the device.

Customer service qualities are an important part of purchasing a system. You should ask lots of questions. What training on how to use and care for the equipment? What are the protocols during emergency calls, staying on the line with you?

Some other considerations:

1. What is cost of installation and monthly monitoring charge?
2. Can I cancel monthly contract at any time, or do you require a long term contract?
3. Do you have free installation for low-income seniors?
4. Who is my contact if I have questions, equipment problems, etc.? Is it a local contact?
5. Do the devices only work within a certain distance of the port and do they require charging?
6. What if the monitoring center has an outage? What backups are there?

PERS can help seniors remain more independent and can extend the time they remain in their own homes. Many companies provide these home systems in our area. LifeLine out of Kootenai Medical Center provides a lower cost than if you purchase direct from the company and Direct Link from Home Helpers also has help for installation costs for low income households; Life Alert; LifeStation; Freedom Alert; Link to Life, etc. Some of these companies also have medication reminders or dispensers for an additional cost. Check their websites for more information.

Contact Betsy Bullard, Area Agency on Aging, at 667-3179, ext. 222, or email [infoassist@aaani.org](mailto:infoassist@aaani.org) to find out more about these options and other resources. For other caregiver tips go to our website at [www.aaani.org](http://www.aaani.org) and click on Caregiving.