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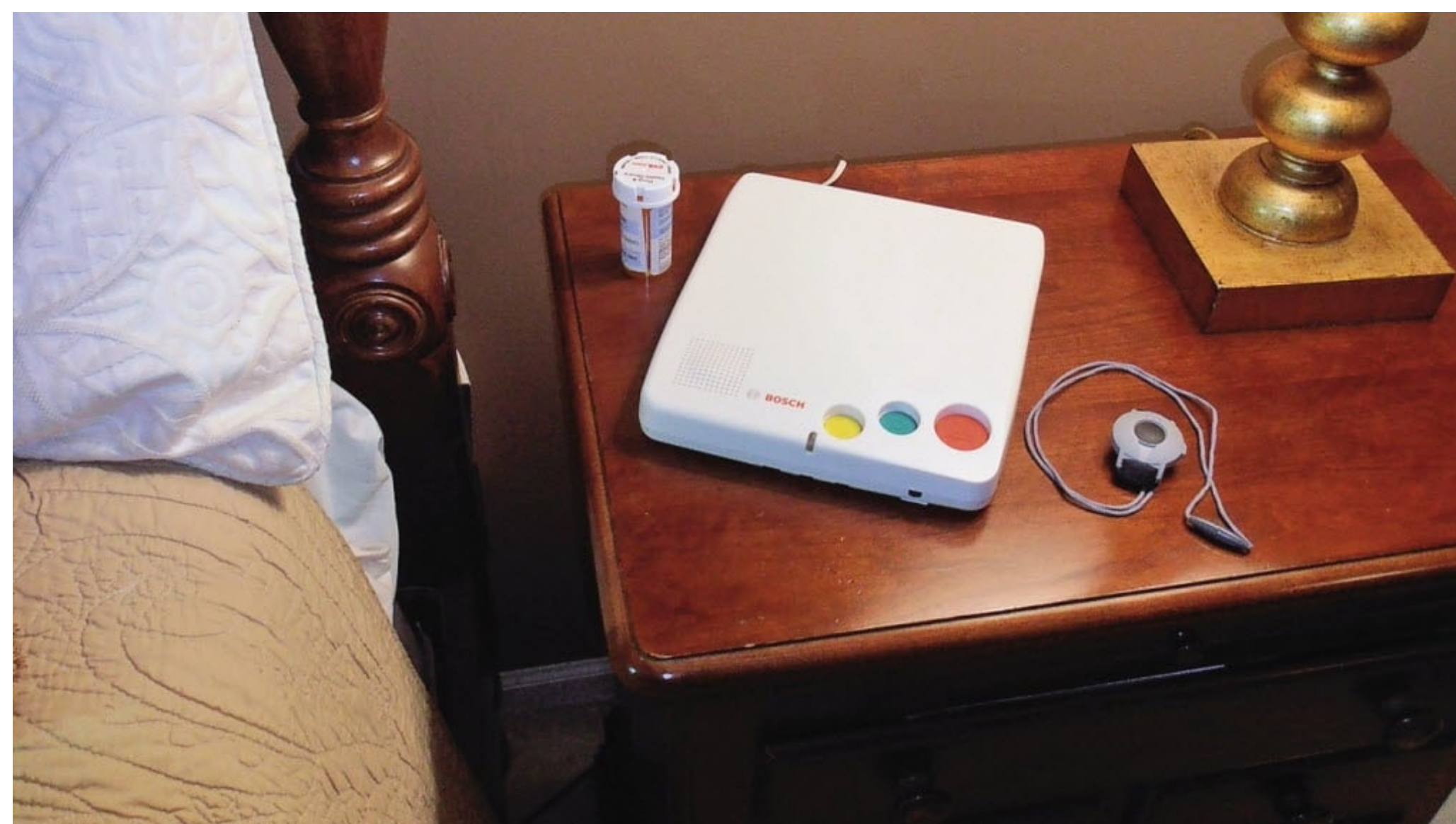
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ANGIE'S LIST GUIDE TO

Medical Alert Systems

A medical alert system is an electronic device that provides monitoring services for independently living elderly or disabled people. In an emergency, they can connect to the provider's response center, which can summon help.

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Home medical alert systems add an extra layer of security, keeping seniors in contact with emergency personnel at all times should they fall (Photo courtesy of Medical Care Alert)

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What medical alert systems do

These devices provide a beneficial service to older adults and disabled persons, especially those wishing to live independently but with greater peace of mind. You generally wear a transmitter in the form of a pendant, wristband or belt clip. These transmitters are all waterproof, which is an important feature because you'll need to keep your device with you around-the-clock, especially in bathrooms where many household accidents occur.

The components of a medical alert system include the communications console unit and the wearable, monitoring device. The main console is integrated with your telephone system. The device contains a radio transmitter that sends signals to the main console unit when you activate it by pressing the help button. If you become disabled during an emergency and can't speak, the alert system can still connect to the response center and immediately call for help. The monitoring system is designed in such a way that, when the user activates it, a signal directs the console unit to immediately contact preselected emergency phone numbers for help.

A quality monitoring system device will have a long-life battery, usually a lithium battery that is designed to last for several years. Some units may offer a built-in feature that lets you know when the battery charge is getting low or you need to replace the battery. The main console unit also should have a battery-backup system in the event of power outages. A quality emergency monitoring system will have built-in voice-command features so that trained employees at the main response centers can communicate directly with you even if you're unable to talk.

Researching medical alert systems

You may find it helpful to make up a checklist to guide you when considering a medical alert system. When looking at the available services companies provide, you want to have access to a reliable product and, most importantly, to around-the-clock monitoring services. You will want the assurance that if you need emergency help, the medical device you are wearing will not only function properly: contacting the service provider's response center, which quickly sends emergency personnel to your home.

When checking different companies that provide emergency monitoring services, ask whether the call-in response centers are located on-site or if the services are integrated with a national call center. Quality service personnel will reassure you that help will be there when you need it most. A medical monitoring system should have the ability to override a busy signal on your phone to contact the response center to send help during an emergency.

Consider your options

Your options for emergency monitoring services include purchasing a system or signing a contract to rent or lease such systems over time. Prices for monitoring systems will vary depending on the type of equipment. Contact your health insurance provider to see if your policy covers such equipment and services. If so, you may need to get documentation in the form of a recommendation letter from your physician. Depending on your income level, social providers may be able to help subsidize the cost.

Read the fine print closely before you sign any contract for an emergency monitoring system. Be aware of cancellation policies if you should change your mind. Whether you decide to buy or rent an emergency monitoring system, one important feature is access to continual technical support. Monitoring systems that are purchased in lieu of renting should give you a warranty. The benefits of renting a system on a monthly basis include access to replacement equipment if any components should fail. Check other customers' experiences with companies by checking member reviews and ratings on [Angie's List](#) so that you can choose a quality emergency monitoring service system.

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