What is a Personal Alarm?

A personal alarm is a wearable safety device that will call for assistance if the user is in need and unable to get to a phone. A personal alarm can help someone maintain their independence and safety at home, and in the community.

Who will the personal alarm contact in an emergency?

There are two basic types of personal alarms, which operate differently (non-monitored and professionally monitored).

Non-Monitored:

The user's emergency contacts may be their family members, friends, neighbours, or carers. At the time of activation, the alarm will automatically call through to whoever is listed as an emergency contact. The only ongoing cost is the annual SIM card renewal fee.

Professionally monitored:

At the time of activation, the alarm will call through to a professional monitoring service whose purpose is to take personal alarm calls 24/7. This service will have the user's relevant personal information including address, medical history, and emergency contacts. If the user is not responding to the phone operator, they will follow the action plan previously provided by the user (i.e. Call a family member or an ambulance). There are ongoing fees associated with these personal alarms.

How is a personal alarm worn?

For the most reliable falls detection and easier access, it is recommended a personal alarm be worn around the neck on a lanyard. Most devices may also be worn on the wrist or a belt clip as an alternative.

Where can I use a personal alarm?

There are different types of personal alarms available, depending on if the personal alarm is to be used in the community, or just at home. These are referred to as *home-based* and *community-based* personal alarms.

Home-based personal alarms:

Home-based personal 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 emergency 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 personal alarms:

Community-based personal alarms are self-contained devices, which means that all communication and technology is contained within the pendant or watch. This means they can be used both at home and in the community (anywhere that receives mobile phone reception). These alarms require regular charging.

What are some common personal alarm features?

Automatic falls detection:

Most community-based personal alarms and some home-based alarms, include automatic falls detection. These contain sensors that aim to detect if a person has fallen over and will automatically send an alert to the emergency contacts. The exact function of this will vary between models and this feature may not work for all falls. Therefore, it is important to remember to press the SOS button whenever help is required.

Water Resistance:

Most personal alarms are water resistant and can be worn whilst showering. However, it is important to remember to avoid fully submerging the alarm, and ensure it is dry before charging.

GPS:

Most community-based personal alarms include GPS, or Global Positioning Satellite, technology. When a personal alarm with GPS is activated, the personal alarm will send its location to the allocated emergency contacts via text message.

Additional Considerations

➤ In the event of an emergency, how will the responder enter the wearer's house? They may like to consider a 'key lock box' or 'key safe' This allows the user to securely place a spare key at the front of their house, with only those with the access code able to obtain the key. Some installation may be required.

➤ The personal alarm will have its own mobile number. When receiving a personal alarm, make sure all contacts save the personal alarm's mobile number in their phone, so the emergency contacts know not to ignore the emergency call when it comes through. It is important to also have an action plan in place if a call is received, and the wearer is not responding – i.e. Do they call a family member, friend, or emergency service?

➤ Mobile pendant alarm numbers are often whitelisted so only the emergency contacts listed can call the pendant. This means emergency services cannot call the pendant; however, this is not normally required. Contact alarm supplier to make changes to whitelisting.

➤ 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.

➤ It is recommended that you test your personal alarm regularly to ensure it is functioning. A practise call once a month is advised.

If you have questions about the pendant alarms (or other equipment), please do not hesitate to contact our friendly team via **08 9381 0600**; or help@indigosolutions.org.au