

Monitored VS Unmonitored Medical Alert Systems

A monitoring center or central monitoring station (CMS) provides around the clock monitoring and support for critical event management of medical alert devices. Typically, they charge a monthly fee for their service. It's worth considering a monitoring center that is "UL Listed" (Underwriters Laboratories) as they adhere to the strict standard set by UL. Also, "UL listed" companies typically offer higher levels of service and reliability.

A monitored Medical Alert system assures reliable protection and care, 24/7, all year round. The monitoring service does not take sick days, vacations or public holidays. The service is dedicated to watching over you and ensures that the help you need gets to you in a timely fashion.

The monitoring center does more than dispatch emergency services or responders to your aid. They are equipped with vital information pertaining to the medications you take, allergies and drug interactions, pre-existing medical conditions and if mobility, speech or hearing challenges exist. The monitoring center is also able to inform emergency services about the location of keys or provide lock box code for entry to your home. This prevents unnecessary delays getting to you in an emergency, and could have a critical difference in outcomes. It also saves your door and entrance from forced entry damage.

An unmonitored system typically relies on a caregiver, usually a family member, to perform the monitoring function. The system is usually set up so that the caregiver receives a notification, either via text or email when a critical event occurs such as falls, or when the help button is pressed. For a system that is GPS enabled, the user's location can be tracked, otherwise that option is not available.

Several occurrences are common for unmonitored systems. Most commonly, the care is unavailable at the time they are needed. They could have been on vacation, sick, not within cellular range, in a meeting or something else. Another common concern is that the caregiver develops alert insensitivity. This is when they become so accustomed to receiving notification alerts that they are no longer perceived as important or urgent and likely to be ignored. The caregiver also could develop anxiety, depression and mental fatigue having to bear the responsibility of monitoring and responding when help is needed. Over time, the role of caregiver and critical event responder takes a toll and that affects everyone.

The benefit of unmonitored medical alerts is not having to pay monthly monitoring fees. The other factor to consider is how quickly and unexpectedly the situation could change. A user may experience a fall or illness that drastically affects their ability to live independently and needs to be in assisted or placed in long-term care. These facilities usually have their own medical alert systems and the system you invested in will no longer be needed. Some of these systems can be costly. Lastly, an unmonitored system can only work for someone that has a caregiver willing to take on the responsibility. Assigning emergency services as your responder is not a viable option. Emergency services will not be able to track the user's location unless they were verbally informed.