Making Daily Life Safer: A Practical Safety Review for Older People Living Independently

Why a Safety Review Matters for Independent Living

For many older people, remaining in their own home is a priority. It means keeping routines, staying in a familiar neighbourhood, and maintaining a sense of control. But living alone also brings real risks: a fall, a sudden health episode, or a moment when help is needed quickly and there is no one nearby. A practical safety review helps you spot those risks before they turn into emergencies. It also helps you choose the right support so that you can stay at home with more confidence.

Start with the Home Environment: Trip Hazards and Access

Most falls happen at home, often because of small, fixable hazards. Walk through each room and look at floor surfaces. Loose rugs, trailing cables, and clutter in hallways are common trip points. Secure rugs with non-slip tape or remove them altogether. Tuck cables against walls or use cable covers. Keep walking paths clear, especially from the bedroom to the bathroom. At night, a clear path matters even more. Consider adding motion-sensor night lights in hallways and bathrooms so you never have to cross a dark room.

Check that essential items are easy to reach. Frequently used kitchen items, medications, and the phone should be at a height you can reach without stretching or climbing. A step stool should be sturdy and have a handrail if you use one. Better yet, reorganise cupboards so that daily-use items sit between hip and eye level.

Bathroom Safety: Where Most Falls Occur

The bathroom is the highest-risk area because of wet, slippery surfaces and hard fixtures. Check that you have non-slip mats inside and outside the shower or bath. A shower chair or a sturdy plastic stool can make washing safer. Grab bars near the toilet and in the shower area provide support when you feel unsteady. If you do not have them, ask a handyperson or a relative to install them. A raised toilet seat can also help you avoid awkward twisting or straining.

View the location on Google Maps

Water temperature is another safety point. If your hot water system has no temperature regulator, set the thermostat to 50°C or lower to prevent scalding. Test the water with your elbow or a thermometer before stepping in.



Kitchen and Fire Safety

Cooking is a daily task, but it can be dangerous if you become distracted or unwell. Check that you have a working smoke alarm on each floor and test it monthly. Keep a fire extinguisher in the kitchen and know how to use it. Never leave the stove unattended while cooking, and use a timer to remind you when something is done. If you have a gas stove, be aware that a gas smell means you should turn off the supply at the knob if it is safe to do so, open windows, avoid using any switches or flames, leave the house, and call the gas supplier or a qualified gas technician. Do not wait for the smell to clear.

For electric appliances, check that cords are in good condition and not frayed. Do not overload power boards. Keep the toaster, kettle, and other heat-producing items away from curtains and papers.

Staying Connected: A Personal Alarm for Elderly People

Even with a safer home, a medical event or a fall can happen when you are alone. That is where a personal alarm for elderly people becomes a key part of the safety picture. These devices let you call for help at the press of a button, and many now work both at home and away. When choosing one, check several features:

- **Wearability and comfort:** The alarm should be something you will actually wear every day. Options include a wearable pendant on a lanyard, a wrist button like a watch, a belt clip, an armband, or even a keyring attachment. Choose the style that feels easiest to keep on you at all times, especially at night and in the shower.
- **Battery life and charging routine:** A device that runs out of battery is useless in an emergency. Check how long the battery lasts between charges and whether the device gives you a low-battery warning. Set a regular charging routine so it never catches you off guard.
- **Fall detection:** Automatic fall detection can be a lifesaver if you fall and cannot press the button. Some alarms use sensors to detect a sudden impact and a change in position. Ask whether the detection works in real time and how sensitive it is.
- **Two-way voice calling:** This feature lets the monitoring team or a family member talk to you through the device after you press the alarm. It helps them assess your situation and reassure you while they arrange help.

A personal alarm for elderly people is not just for emergencies. Knowing you have a way to reach someone can reduce anxiety about being alone. It lets you go about your daily activities with more peace of mind.



How the Alarm Connects to Help

Different alarms work in different ways. Some connect to a 24-hour monitoring centre, while others contact your chosen family members or neighbours. For the second type, the device sends an alert by SMS to up to ten nominated contacts. It can call them in a programmed order until someone answers. If no one does, the device can be set to call 111 directly. This approach means your family can be the first to know something is wrong, which many people prefer. The device works at home and away wherever compatible New Zealand mobile coverage is available, so you can wear it on walks, shopping trips, or visits to friends.

Check Communication and Contact Details

An alarm is only as good as the contact list behind it. Make sure your emergency contacts are up to date. Check that the people you have listed know they are on the list and are willing to respond. If you use a family-monitored system, test it regularly. Press the button and confirm that the right person receives the alert. A monthly test keeps the system fresh and gives you confidence. Also check that your phone number and address are correct in the alarm's settings. If you change your mobile number, update it right away.

Medication Management and Health Prep

Missed or double-dosed medication can cause serious health problems. Set up a system that works for you: a weekly pill organiser, a daily phone alarm, or a medication reminder app. If you use multiple medicines, keep a list of them along with dosages and times. Put the list where a paramedic or family member can find it easily, such as on the fridge door. Also write down your doctor's name, your medical conditions, and any allergies. This information can save precious minutes in an emergency.

Daily Routines That Build Safety

Small habits make a big difference. Keep your phone charged and within reach, especially at night. Charge your personal alarm on a schedule, and put it on as soon as you get dressed in the morning. If you feel unsteady, do not rush. Sit down and rest before moving again. Let a family member or neighbour know your daily plan, so they notice if something is off. Some people set a daily check-in time with a relative: a quick text or call that confirms everything is okay.



A Local Option to Consider

For those in New Zealand looking at personal alarms, one option is Familyr, a Kiwi-owned company that provides family-monitored personal medical alarms. Their devices offer SOS alerts, GPS location sharing, automatic fall detection, and two-way voice calling. The alarms have no ongoing monitoring fee and include lifetime support. You can reach Familyr at 14 Grand View Road, Remuera, Auckland 1050, New Zealand, phone +64 9 872 0345, for more details about how their service works.

Putting It All Together

Independent living is about making choices that let you stay in your own home while managing the risks. A thorough safety review covers your home environment, your emergency response plan, and your daily routines. A personal alarm for elderly people is one part of that plan, but the thinking behind it matters more. Check your home for trip hazards, test your alarms, keep your contact list current, and build habits that support your safety. Each step reduces the chance of a crisis and makes it easier to handle one if it comes. With the right preparation, you can enjoy your independence with less worry and more confidence.

Familyr is also on YouTube.