Take your medicine

A guide to pill boxes, dispensers and reminders

February 2010
Introduction

It’s all too easy to forget to take medicines and it’s easy to get confused if you have a lot to take at different times. A World Health Organization survey found that half of people who took medicines long term took them incorrectly.

This guide tells you about different ways of getting round this problem and looks at some gadgets designed to help.

We got eight professionals and users to assess some of the gadgets. You can find their reviews on pages 10-15.

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Safety first

Keep pills and pill boxes away from children.

Many of the gadgets described in this guide may be attractive to young children because they ring bells or speak messages, or because of their bright colours. Make sure they don’t get into the wrong hands.

Record Cards

Some pill boxes come with record cards which are used to note down what medicines you take when. This information is really important if you go into hospital, change your doctor or need to give someone details of what medicines you are taking.

Make sure you know what to do if you miss a dose.

Usually the right thing to do is to carry on with the next dose when it is due - don’t take a double dose - but this may be different for some kinds of medicine. Check with your doctor or pharmacist.
What are the options?

Start simple

If you are having problems remembering your medicines, or getting confused about which ones to take when, there are some simple things you can try. It might be a good idea to try some of these before you buy any equipment.

Confused by all your medicines?

• talk to your doctor
If you have a lot of medicines to take, at different times, and it’s getting confusing, try talking to your doctor. They might be able to change your prescription to make things simpler.

• make a chart
Make a chart with the names of your medicines, the dose and when you take them. If you get confused you can look at your chart. It might help to add a description of each medicine.

• get a pill box
If you have a daily pill box (see page 6) you can sort out your medicines every day, or get someone to do it for you. Then you won’t get them muddled up.

Can’t get the lid off?

• get a gadget
You can get gadgets to help with opening bottles. You can even get one to help push your pills out of a blister pack. Ask your chemist, look in a local mobility shop, or go online (see pages 17-22 for contacts).

• ask a friend
Perhaps you can get someone to get your medicines out for you. This is easy if they live close by, or if you don’t have many medicines to take.

• get a pill box
If you can only get help once a day, or less often, and you take a lot of medicines, you might need to get a pill box (see page 6). Then someone can get the pills out for you, and pop them in the box to keep them in order.

If you can’t get help every day, you might need a weekly pill box (see page 6). Then someone can sort out your medicines in advance.
Keep forgetting?

• **leave yourself a note**
  Write a reminder on a card or a Post-it note and leave it where you are likely to see it when it's time for your medicine - for example on the fridge or the bathroom mirror.

• **get into a routine**
  It’s easier to remember things if you do them at the same time every day. You could:
  
  • Keep your pills next to your toothbrush and take them just before you brush your teeth in the morning.
  
  • Keep them in the kitchen and take them when you are getting your lunch in the afternoon.
  
  • Put them on the telly and take them when you are watching your favourite programme in the evening.

• **ask someone to help you**
  Perhaps a friend, relative or neighbour could pop round or give you a ring to check you’ve taken your medicine. Or if you have a helper who comes round regularly, they may be able to help.

• **set an alarm**
  You can use an alarm clock to remind you. If you’ve got a mobile phone or use a computer, you can set it to give you a reminder more than once a day.

• **choose an alarm system**
  You can get specially designed alarm systems that can be set to go off several times a day. Some of these will even give you a written or spoken message. See pages 6, 7 for more information on these.

• **go for telecare**
  If you need someone to check you have taken your medicines, and there’s no one on hand, a telecare system (see page 8) might help.

Out and about?

• **get a box**
  A simple pill box can be useful if you are going to be out and about during the day. They are small and light and will just slip in your bag or pocket.
Gadgets that can help

Pill boxes

These are little boxes with lids that snap shut. They have compartments so you can separate pills to be taken at different times. Sometimes the compartments are labelled.

Daily boxes hold your medicines for the day. Most have four compartments. Some have up to eight.

Weekly boxes hold enough for the whole week. Smaller ones have one or two compartments for each day. Larger ones have four. Some consist of a box or wallet with seven removable daily pill boxes inside, so that you can take just a day’s medicines out with you.

Most pill boxes have see-through lids, so that you can tell straight away if you have missed a tablet. Make sure you know what to do if you miss a dose.

Which end is which?

You need to be sure that you will take your medicines in the right order. This can be tricky if you get confused. Sometimes the compartments are numbered, or labelled with times of the day; some have braille labelling.

Some daily pill boxes are especially confusing because when you hold them horizontally the morning compartment is on the right (you might expect it on the left).

Alarm systems

You can get an alarm that can be set to go off at several times during the day. Some just beep or vibrate. Others display a message on a small screen. One we tested plays a pre-recorded message through a small speaker.

Some alarms can be set to go off up to eight times a day.

Some daily and weekly pill boxes have built in alarms.

Can you hear the beep?

For an alarm system to work, you need to be able to hear it. This may affect which one you choose (some are louder than others; some have vibrating alarms) and it may affect the way you can use it (you might need to make sure it is in the same room as you).

See the tables on pages 10-15 for what each alarm system does and for pictures of what they look like.
Automatic pill dispensers

Some pill boxes automatically dispense the medicine when the alarm goes off. These can be set to dispense pills several times a day. Most have 28 compartments, so you can have up to four a day for a week (or one a day for four weeks).

You, or someone who helps you, can fill the trays at home, or you can get a chemist to do it (see Filling opposite). You can get extra trays so that you can use one at home while the other is being filled by the chemist.

These dispensers can be used as part of a telecare system (see page 8).

Automatic dispensers are not really suitable if you are going to go out during the day. They are too bulky to take with you and you can’t take the day’s medicines out of the dispenser before you go.

Change the batteries

Most automatic dispensers, and alarm systems, run on batteries. If the battery runs out, you could get left high and dry. The safest thing is to simply change the batteries regularly - check how long they are expected to last when you buy the equipment and keep a record of when you change them.

Filling

A large pill box or automatic dispenser can be really handy, but you need to know who is going to fill it for you. This is quite a big job, and it’s important that they get it right.

If you can get a friend or relative to do it for you, then that’s great. They can do it once a week, or if you have spare boxes or trays they can do it every four weeks or something.

If you have a professional carer who comes from the council or the NHS, or who you pay for yourself, they can sort out your medicine for you, but they have to be careful to follow some rules. Basically, they have to do a proper risk assessment and set down what they are going to do to make sure nothing goes wrong. They should speak to the Care Quality Commission (see page 16) about what they need to do.

Pharmacists are allowed to fill dispensers, as long as they give you all the packaging and leaflets from the medicines. Ask your pharmacist if they will. They are not obliged to and most will charge you a small fee.

Whoever fills it, you should always make sure your pharmacist knows you are using a pill box. Some medicines may not be suitable.
Telecare

Telecare is a service that supports people at home by giving them a connection to a call centre and other services.

A lot of people find that telecare helps them stay in their own home.

One very simple kind of telecare is a button that you wear or carry. You can use this to call for help - it alerts a call centre or a friend or relative, who checks if you are all right.

Often you have an intercom in your home that the centre can use to talk to you.

You can also get detectors that:

- alert someone if you fall over
- warn the call centre about things like fire, flooding, gas or carbon monoxide
- monitor your blood pressure, blood sugar level, heart rhythm, lung capacity or other medical measurements
- can tell if you have got out of bed yet, where you are in your home, whether you’re warm enough, or even whether you have had dinner (they go on the fridge door)!

Some automatic pill dispensers can be used with a telecare service. You can have a spoken message that is timed to coincide with when you have to take your medicine, or even get a call from someone to check you have taken it. The automatic dispenser can be set to notify the call centre if you haven’t taken your medicine out. (Of course, they cannot know if you have actually taken the medicine - you remain responsible for that.)

Getting telecare equipment and services

Telecare services are available in most areas, run by councils, housing associations and private firms. Ask your local social services or housing department about services in your area. Depending on where you live you may have to pay a small weekly fee (two or three pounds) to cover the service and equipment.

You can also arrange your own telecare service. You can get the equipment and the monitoring service from a national provider. The Telecare Services Association (TSA) (see page 16) is a trade association representing telecare service providers, local authorities and other interested bodies. They have a code of practice members must follow and they will help you find an accredited supplier.

Alternatively, you can just buy the equipment and set it up to work over the telephone or internet so a friend or relative can keep an eye on you.

Both automatic pill dispensers we tested can be set up to contact a mobile phone number or an email account if you miss a dose. Some of the providers listed on pages 21-22 will sell you the equipment you need and help you set it up.
Things to look out for

If you’re going to get yourself one of the products discussed in this guide, you need to make sure it is going to be right for you. Think about your abilities, your daily routine and what medicines you take when. Here are a few things to watch out for:

• **can you open it?**
  Some containers are easier than others. Try them out if you can.

• **can you see what it’s for and how it works?**
  With some pill boxes it isn’t clear which order to take the pills in. Some alarm systems can be confusing if you aren’t sure what to do when the alarm goes off.

• **can you get all your pills in?**
  Some pill boxes have quite small compartments. If you have a lot of medicines, make sure you are going to be able to get them all in. The product reviews below include pictures that should give you an idea. The pills in the pictures are this size:

• **what if you drop it?**
  Some pill boxes open accidentally when you drop them, or can just open in your bag. If this happens your pills can get mixed up or even lost.

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Our tests

A team of 6 professionals and two users assessed a range of products - 18 in all. They looked for the things in the list on the left and noted how useful each one would be for people with different disabilities.

In the lab we dropped each aid onto a hard floor 26 times to see how they would stand up to accidents.

The results are given on the following pages. Prices shown include VAT and are correct at the time of going to print.

**Key:**

- very good
- good
- poor
- very poor
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model / Price</th>
<th>Pillmate Day Out</th>
<th>Pillmate Large 7 Day</th>
<th>Pillmate Twice A Day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Features</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 compartments</td>
<td>7 compartments</td>
<td>7x2 compartments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>flip open</td>
<td>flip open</td>
<td>flip open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>no record card</td>
<td>no record card</td>
<td>no record card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summary</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simple and cheap</td>
<td>Simple and cheap</td>
<td>Simple and cheap</td>
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<td></td>
<td>way to organise</td>
<td>way to organise your</td>
<td>way to organise your</td>
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<td></td>
<td>your pills for</td>
<td>pills for the week,</td>
<td>pills for the week,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>the day.</td>
<td>if you only take</td>
<td>if you only take</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>them once a day.</td>
<td>them twice a day.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hard to open.</td>
<td>Compartments small</td>
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<td></td>
<td>and hard to open.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Good if you</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Know what pills you</td>
<td></td>
<td>Take daily</td>
<td>Are out and about a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have to take.</td>
<td></td>
<td>supplements.</td>
<td>lot.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Are going on a</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>holiday, perhaps.</td>
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<td><strong>Not good if you</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Have difficulty</td>
<td></td>
<td>Have weak hands.</td>
<td>Have weak hands.</td>
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<tr>
<td>understanding - you</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Have a visual</td>
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<td>could take your pills</td>
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<td></td>
<td>impairment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>in the wrong order.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Easy to use</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Easy to understand</strong></td>
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<td>how it works</td>
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<td><strong>Easy to fill</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Secure (if dropped)</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model / Price</td>
<td>Pillmate Multi Dose Weekly £5.05</td>
<td>Tabtime Wallet £7.99</td>
<td>Keep Able Wallet £9.39</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Features</strong></td>
<td>7x4 compartments slide open</td>
<td>7x4 compartments</td>
<td>7x4 compartments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>record card</td>
<td>flip open</td>
<td>flip open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summary</strong></td>
<td>Simple and cheap way to organise</td>
<td>Neat way to carry</td>
<td>Simple and clear way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>your pills for the week.</td>
<td>your pills for a</td>
<td>to organise your pills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compartments quite small and</td>
<td>week. Easy to get</td>
<td>for the week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hard to open.</td>
<td>your pills in and</td>
<td>Has days printed on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>out. Watch out for</td>
<td>separable day boxes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Good if you</strong></td>
<td>Get confused about your pills.</td>
<td>Get out and about a</td>
<td>Get confused about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use it at home, perhaps.</td>
<td>lot. Are out and</td>
<td>your medicines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Not good if you</strong></td>
<td>Are visually impaired.</td>
<td>Are out and about a</td>
<td>Are visually impaired.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have weak hands.</td>
<td>lot. Are visually</td>
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<td><strong>Easy to use</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Easy to understand how it works</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Easy to fill</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Model / Price</td>
<td>RNIB Darrow Medi Tray £5.99</td>
<td>Le Mem-X £108.10</td>
<td>Vibralite 8 £54.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Features</strong></td>
<td>7x4 compartments flip open no record card</td>
<td>portable reminding device</td>
<td>digital watch with 8 alarms and countdown timer vibrating alarm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summary</strong></td>
<td>Good way to organise your pills for a week. Nice large compartments. Large print and braille labelling. Daily boxes removable.</td>
<td>Very versatile: you can record up to 90 messages to play at fixed times daily, weekly or monthly or at one-off times and dates. Doesn’t store or organise pills.</td>
<td>Discreet way to remind yourself of something, though you have to know what the alarm is for. Doesn’t store or organise pills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Good if you</strong></td>
<td>Know what pills you have to take.</td>
<td>Have difficulty remembering things. Also good for children.</td>
<td>Have to do the same thing at regular intervals each day. Don’t hear well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Not good if you</strong></td>
<td>Have difficulty understanding - you could take your pills in the wrong order.</td>
<td>Might get confused.</td>
<td>Might get confused.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Easy to use</strong></td>
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<td>🙌🏻 ([[1]])</td>
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<td><strong>Easy to understand how it works</strong></td>
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<td>🙋 ([[1]])</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Easy to fill / set alarm</strong></td>
<td>🙌🏻 ([[1]])</td>
<td>🙋 ([[1]])</td>
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<td><strong>Secure (if dropped)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Model / Price</td>
<td>Cadex</td>
<td>Tabtime 5</td>
<td>Tabtime 4</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£47</td>
<td>£19.99</td>
<td>£12.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Features</td>
<td>digital watch with 12 alarms stores information about medical conditions, allergies, blood type, doctor's name, contacts</td>
<td>5 compartments flip open built-in clock with 5 alarms no record card</td>
<td>4 compartments flip open built-in clock with 4 alarms no record card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>Discreet way to remind yourself of something, though you have to know what the alarm is for. Doesn’t store or organise pills.</td>
<td>Quite a neat way to take your pills out for the day, with a built-in alarm to remind you to take them. Alarm very quiet.</td>
<td>Discreet way to take your pills out for the day, with a built-in alarm to remind you to take them. Tricky to open.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good if you</td>
<td>Have to do the same thing at regular intervals each day. Don’t hear well.</td>
<td>Can organise your own pills, and are out and about in the day.</td>
<td>Can organise your own pills, and are out and about in the day.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Easy to use</th>
<th>Easy to understand how it works</th>
<th>Easy to fill / set alarm</th>
<th>Secure (if dropped)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Model / Price</td>
<td>Features</td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>Good if you</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| PivoTell MiniTell £14.10 | 5 compartments twist open
built-in clock with 5 alarms
vibrating alarm
no record card | Neat way to take your pills out for the day, with a built-in alarm to remind you to take them. Difficult to open. | Can organise your own pills, and are out and about in the day. | Might get confused. Have weak hands. Might drop it. |  |  |  |  |
| Tabtime Snap-on £12.99 | 7 detachable compartments flip open
built-in clock with 5 alarms
countdown timer | Bright, attractive and versatile pill box. Difficult to open. Alarm very quiet. Boxes are printed with manufacturer and brand name - could be confusing. | Can organise your own pills. | Might get confused. Have weak hands. |  |  |  |  |
| Tabtime Medminder £24.99 | 7x4 compartments flip open
built-in clock with 4 alarms
magnetic holder fixes to fridge or similar | Very flexible way to organise your pills for the week. Quite easy to understand. Compartments are small. | Are busy, and need a little help remembering your pills. | Have weak hands. Might drop it. |  |  |  |  |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model / Price</th>
<th>PivoTell Automatic Pill Dispenser £111.62</th>
<th>Medready £109.99</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Image" /></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image4.png" alt="Image" /></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>28 compartments automatic opening</th>
<th>28 compartments automatic opening</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 sound and light alarms record card</td>
<td>4 sound and light alarms record card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>lockable low battery alert telecare option</td>
<td>lockable mains operated (with backup battery) telecare option</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Summary       | Useful way of organising your pills a week or more in advance and reminding you when to take them. Clear and easy to understand. Not very flexible. You have to pick it up and tip it to get the pills out (though a tipper is available to help). | Useful way of organising your pills a week or more in advance and reminding you when to take them. Quite clear and easy to understand. Not very flexible. Very large (12 inches across). |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good if you</th>
<th>Are at home on your own much of the time, and need a lot of help remembering your pills.</th>
<th>Are at home on your own much of the time, and need a lot of help remembering your pills.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Not good if you | Are out and about a lot. | Are out and about a lot. |

| Easy to use       | ![Rating](rating1.png) | ![Rating](rating2.png) |
| Easy to understand how it works | ![Rating](rating3.png) | ![Rating](rating4.png) |
| Easy to fill      | ![Rating](rating5.png) | ![Rating](rating6.png) |
| Secure (if dropped) | ![Rating](rating7.png) | ![Rating](rating8.png) |
Help and advice

You may be surprised at how much help and advice there is around. To get it you often need to know who to ask.

On these seven pages we give a run down of the organisations that may be able to help. Not only will they help you if you need more information on the kind of equipment described in this booklet, but they also have lots of information and advice on other things. We’ve listed each organisation under these headings:

On telecare p16

Rules on medicines for professional carers p16

On Alzheimer’s disease and dementia p17

On local services p18

On equipment generally p19

Helpful organisations for older people p20

Shops and suppliers p21-22

On telecare

Telecare Services Association (TSA)
This is a trade association that represents, telecare service providers, local authorities and others involved in the industry. Their website has basic information on telecare systems and you can use it to find a local service or details of suppliers of equipment.
Suite 8 Wilmslow House
Grove Way
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AG
Tel: 01625 520320
Fax: 01625 533021
Email: admin@telecare.org.uk
www.telecare.org.uk

Rules on medicines for professional carers

Care Quality Commission
If you have a paid helper, rather than a friend or family member who helps you, the helper is obliged by law to follow certain rules. These rules include what they are allowed to do when helping you take medicines. The Care Quality Commission is the organisation responsible for these rules.
Citygate
Gallowgate
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 4PA
Tel: 03000 616161
Email: enquiries@cqc.org.uk
www.cqc.org.uk
On Alzheimer’s disease and dementia

Not everyone who needs a medicine reminder has Alzheimer’s or dementia. However many people are affected by these conditions. It is predicted that by 2021 one million people in the UK will have dementia. So here are details of sources of help.

Alzheimers Society
The Alzheimer’s Society is a membership organisation working for people affected by dementia. It has over 250 local branches in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (see below for Scotland). Local branches provide information and practical help such as day and home care and befriending services.

The Society has a helpline and over a hundred factsheets on different topics. They should be able to answer any question on dementia. If you become a member (there is no fixed subscription, but donations are welcome) you will receive a copy of their monthly magazine.
Devon House
58 St Katharine’s Way
London E1W 1JX
Helpline: 0845 300 0336
Fax: 020 7423 350
Email: enquiries@alzheimers.org.uk
www.alzheimers.org.uk

Alzheimer Scotland
Alzheimer Scotland have day and drop in centres and offer home and other support in many areas in Scotland. Their quarterly newsletter is free to members. Membership costs £5 a year for people with dementia and their carers, people aged over 65 and unwaged; otherwise it’s £20.
22 Drumsheugh Gardens
Edinburgh EH3 7RN
Helpline: 0808 808 3000
Fax: 0131 243 1450
Email: alzheimer@alzscot.org
www.alzscot.org

AT Dementia
This website has information about the equipment that can help people with dementia. It has a database of products that you can look through and a lot of other useful information too, including links to advice sheets produced by other organisations, a useful list of frequently asked questions and online discussion groups. They have a useful factsheet on how to get telecare and other assistive technology equipment.
Trent Dementia Services Development Centre
9 Newarke Street
Leicester LE1 5SN
Tel: 0116 257 5017
Fax: 0116 254 3983
Email: info@trentdsdc.org.uk
www.atdementia.org.uk

Dementia Gateway
Late last year the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) launched the Dementia Gateway. Although mainly aimed at health professionals this clear and well laid out site has really useful and practical information for anyone affected by dementia. There are links to useful resources including specialist groups.
www.scie.org.uk/publications/dementia/index.asp
On local services

To find out what your local social services or health services provide you can talk to them directly. Look under social services under the name of your local authority or get in touch with any council information service.

For health services, talk to your GP who should be able to tell you about what services there are. Health services are listed under health in local phone books, so you can also contact individual services directly.

For local information generally, try the following:

Citizens Advice Bureau
Citizens Advice provide face-to-face information in over 3,200 locations in the UK. They will advise anyone on anything, but many enquiries are about debt, benefits, housing, employment, consumer issues, relationships, family matters, health, education, discrimination, immigration and the law. Each bureau is different and you can expect that they will be set up to reflect the area they are in. For example they are likely to have multi-lingual advisors in some areas and will be able to provide information on issues that are important locally. All help is free. To find your nearest bureau, look under Citizens Advice in your phone book or enter your postcode in one of the following websites:

Northern Ireland: www.citizensadvice.co.uk

England and Wales: www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Scotland: www.cas.org.uk

DIAL UK
DIAL UK is a network of some 120 local Disability Information and Advice Line services (DIALs) in England, Scotland and Wales. They are run by disabled people for disabled people. They give information and advice on anything to do with living with a disability.

To find your nearest DIAL contact:
St Catherine’s
Tickhill Road
Doncaster DN4 8QN
Tel: 01302 310123
Fax: 01302 310404
Textphone: 01302 310123 and use voice announcer
Email: informationenquiries@dialuk.org.uk
www.dialuk.info
On equipment generally

It’s usually worth spending the time getting information on any item of equipment you are thinking of getting. How much you need depends on you, the type of equipment you are thinking about and what you intend to use it for.

Disabled Living Foundation (DLF)
The DLF provides comprehensive information about equipment and where to get it. Their website includes clearly written guides about a range of daily living equipment. You can also find suppliers for any kind of assistive technology equipment and a guide to telecare (http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/telecare-167/).

AskSARA is a very helpful online system that will tell you what kind of equipment may help you. You choose a topic (such as bathroom, gardening, hobbies or leisure or hearing) and answer a series of very simple questions. AskSARA gives you a rundown of things that might help, things to think about and advice on what to do next.

The DLF helpline will give you information over the phone and they can send you printed guides and information.

Disabled Living Centres

There are over 40 Disabled Living Centres (called independent living centres in some places) up and down the country. Most centres have displays of equipment that you can see and try out – they stock and display a variety of products to meet most needs. They can advise you about the range of equipment and solutions available to meet your needs and where it is available. They will often advise you about the best way of getting equipment too, whether this be by buying privately or through the social or health services.

Most DLCs operate as charities so offer impartial advice. If they do sell equipment their main consideration is to provide you with the information for specific solutions and give you choice. If possible ring to make an appointment before you visit a DLC so they can make sure there is someone free to talk to you. To find your nearest centre contact:

Assist UK
Redbank House
4 St Chad’s Street
Manchester M8 8QA
Tel: 0161 8341044
Fax: 0870 7702867
Textphone: 0870 7705813
Email: general.info@assist-uk.org
www.assist-uk.org

380-384 Harrow Road
London W9 2HU
Local rate Helpline: 0845 130 9177
Fax: 020 7266 2922
Textphone: 020 7432 8009
Email: advice@dlf.org.uk
www.dlf.org.uk
www.asksara.org.uk
www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk
Helpful organisations for older people

**Age UK**

From Spring 2010 Age Concern (including Age Scotland, Age Cymru and Age NI) and Help the Aged will have joined forces and will be known as Age UK. At the time of writing (January 2010) you could still visit the Age Concern and Help the Aged websites separately. Both sites have very helpful publications and guides, and a lot of other useful information. So try to look at both.

www.ageconcern.org.uk  
www.helptheaged.org.uk

You can contact the joint national organisations at these websites and at:

**England**

York House  
207-221 Pentonville Road  
London N1 9UZ  
Tel: 020 7278 1114  
Fax: 020 7278 1116  
Email: info@helptheaged.org.uk

Astral House  
1268 London Road  
London SW16 4ER  
Tel: 0800 009966

**Scotland**

Causewayside House  
160 Causewayside  
Edinburgh EH9 1PR  
Tel: 0845 833 0200  
Email: enquiries@ageconcernandhelptheagedscotland.org.uk

**Wales**

Tŷ John Pathy  
Units 13/14  
Neptune Court  
Vanguard Way  
Cardiff CF24 5PJ  
Tel: 029 2043 1555  
Email: enquiries@agecymru.org.uk

**Northern Ireland**

3 Lower Crescent  
Belfast BT7 1NR  
Tel: 02890 230 666  
Email: info@ageconcernhelptheagedni.org

To find your nearest local Age Concern group go to:

Age Concern England  
Helpline: 0800 00 99 66  
www.ageconcern.org.uk

Age Concern Northern Ireland  
Tel: 028 9024 5729  
Fax: 028 9023 5479  
Email: info@ageconcernni.org  
www.ageconcernni.org

Age Concern Scotland  
Scottish Helpline for Older People: 0845 125 9732  
Fax: 0845 833 0759  
Email: enquiries@acscot.org.uk  
www.ageconcernscotland.org.uk

Age Concern Wales  
Tel: 029 2043 1555  
Fax: 029 2047 1418  
Email: enquiries@accymru.org.uk  
www.accymru.org.uk
Shops and suppliers

You can get simple pill boxes in chemist’s shops, though they might not have a wide range. Try somewhere else if you don’t see the kind of thing you’re after.

For more complicated boxes and alarm systems go to a specialist shop or a mail order supplier. We list the main mail order suppliers here. To find local specialist shops, look in your classified phone book or ask your local council or a local information service (for example CAB, DIAL or DLC (see pages 18-19)).

There are also specialist suppliers who sell their own range of pill boxes, alarms and dispensers. The main ones are listed on page 22. Automatic dispensers can be got from telecare service providers. Contact the TSA (see page 16) to find them.

Mail order suppliers

Able Living
2nd Floor Patman House
23 - 27 Electric Parade, George Lane
London E18 2LS
Tel: 0871 2205232
Email: info@ableliving.com
www.ableliving.com

Ability Answers
Unit 2 Cwm Road
Swansea SA1 2AY
Tel: 01792 412700
Fax: 01792 534102
Email: info@tekability.com
www.tekability.com

British Red Cross Shop
PO Box 400
Witney OX28 9BZ
Tel: 0844 89 300 89
Email: customerservicecentre@redcross.org.uk
www.redcross.org.uk/shop

Force Ten
6 Beckley Parade, Leatherhead Road
Great Bookham
Surrey KT23 4RQ
Tel: 01372 45 0 887
Email: sales@forcetenco.co.uk
www.forcetenco.co.uk

Go Independent
Unit A2 Kingfisher Business Park
Hawthorne Road
Bootle L20 6PF
Tel: 0151 922 4455
Email: info@goindependent.co.uk
www.goin.co.uk

Homecraft Rolyan
Nunn Brook Road
Huthwaite
Nottinghamshire NG17 2HU
Tel: 0844 4124330
Fax: 0844 8730100
www.homecraft-rolyan.com

Nottingham Rehab Supplies
Clinitron House
Excelsior Road
Ashby de la Zouch LE65 1JG
Tel: 0845 1218111
Fax: 0845 1218112
www.nrs-uk.co.uk
Promedics
Moorgate Street
Blackburn BB2 4PB
Tel: 01254 619000
Fax: 01254 619001
Email: enquiries@promedics.co.uk
www.promedics.co.uk

RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind People)
105 Judd Street
London WC1H 9NE
Helpline: 0303 1239999
Fax: 020 7388 2034
Email: helpline@rnib.org.uk
onlineshop.rnib.org.uk

RNID (Royal National Institute for Deaf People)
1 Haddonbrook Business Centre
Orton Southgate
Peterborough PE2 6YX
Tel: 01733 361199
Text: 01733 238020
Fax: 01733 361161
Email: solutions@rnid.org.uk
www.rnid.org.uk/shop

Specialist suppliers

Medicalarm
Sell a range of pill boxes and reminders.
Tel: 01604 646200
Fax: 01604 646767
Email: sales@medicalarm.co.uk
www.medicalarm.co.uk

Pivotell
Make and sell a range of pill boxes and reminders.
Tel: 01799 550979
Fax: 01799 550838
Email: office@pivotell.co.uk
www.pivotell.co.uk

Shanty’s
Make and sell a range of pill boxes and other equipment.
Tel: 020 8595 7836
Fax: 020 8593 3188
Email: shanty@shantys.com
www.shantys.com

Tabtime
Make and sell a range of pill boxes and reminders.
Tel: 01270 767207
Email: info@tabtime.co.uk
www.tabtime.com

Vivatec
Sell a range of telecare equipment, including automatic pill dispensers.
Tel: 01235 43 2050
Fax: 0870 243 0999
Email: sales@vivatec.co.uk
www.vivatec.co.uk
Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the Department of Health for funding this series of guides. Others in the series are:

- Stepping out - a guide to wheeled walking frames.
- Are you sitting comfortably? - a guide to riser recliner chairs.

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- Shanty's
- Pivotell
- Tabtime

Ricability

We are a national research charity dedicated to providing independent information of value to disabled and older consumers.

Our reports are all based on rigorous research, and provide practical information in a usable form.

We have information about:

- cars and driving adaptations for disabled people
- digital television equipment
- DAB radios
- domestic appliances
- childcare products suitable for disabled parents
- other aids and equipment

Our website also provides a guide to consumer rights and public services and has an extensive database of useful organisations.

Tel: 020 7427 2460
Textphone: 020 7427 2469
Email: mail@ricability.org.uk
www.ricability.org.uk
www.ricability-digitaltv.org.uk

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