

# Caregiver Assistance News

“CARING FOR YOU...CARING FOR OTHERS”

## Practical Aids for Living

Many people have some physical limitations, whether these involve moving, seeing, hearing, communicating or using everyday tools like knives, forks, spoons, toothbrushes or telephones. Solutions exist for overcoming these limitations.

It is important to assess medical, social, and environmental factors to make a good decision on what equipment you need. Before buying any equipment or signing any contract for rental, consult your doctor, physical or occupational therapist, or nurse. Salespeople may not have the training necessary to assist you in making a decision about what you need. Occupational therapists can consult on low-cost substitutes for expensive equipment.

With appropriate doctor's orders and documentation, Medicare or private insurance covers some equipment. For individuals covered by Medicare only (or Medicare and private insurance), you should contact your insurance carrier to check if the equipment is covered. Then follow their procedures for pre-authorization.

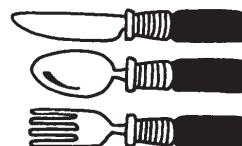
The following are a few of the assistive devices that can make life easier.

### Eating Aids

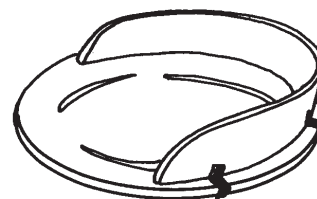
- Spoons that swivel for those who have trouble with wrist movement



- Foam that can be fit over utensils to increase the gripping surface so they can be lifted more easily



- Plate guards or dishes with high sides that make it easier to scoop food onto a spoon



- Rocker knives that can cut food with a rocking motion



- Food-warming dishes for slow eaters
- Mugs with two handles, a cover, a spout, and a suction base

## Flu Season—Why Get Your Flu Shot?

Influenza is a serious disease that can lead to hospitalization and sometimes even death. Between 80% and 90% of flu related deaths have occurred in people 65 years and older. “Flu season” in the United States can begin as early as October and last as late as May.

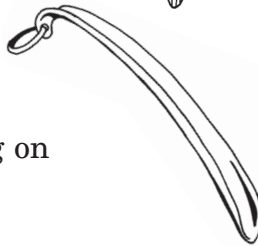
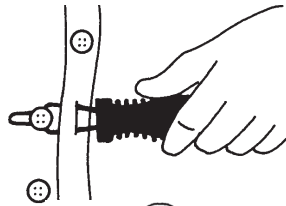
Source: Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

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**Dressing Aids**

- **Buttonhooks** that make buttoning clothes easy
- **Dressing sticks** that make it possible to dress without bending
- **Long-handled shoehorns** so a person doesn't have to bend over when putting on shoes
- **Elastic laces** for shoes to allow slip-on

**Devices for Summoning Help**

- Touch-tone phones with speed dials
- Medical security response systems
- Beepers for the caregiver
- Wireless transmitters for emergency response

**How to Pay for Medical Equipment**

If you need assistance in paying for medical equipment:

- Ask the doctor to write a prescription for a home evaluation (assessment), including an evaluation of needed equipment.
- If you are going through county services for in-home support, ask your assessment social worker what recommended medical equipment can be paid for. You might have a waiver.
- Find out if the equipment is partly or completely covered by private health insurance with home care benefits.
- Check state retirement and union programs.

To find a supplier who is enrolled in the Medicare program, visit [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) and select “**Find Suppliers of Medical Equipment & Supplies.**” Call (800) MEDICARE (800-633-4227) for information. TTY (877) 486-2048.

### Taking Care of Yourself—Mood Booster - Make a Date

Caregivers are some of the busiest people in the world. By some estimates, the average caregiver day is 18 hours long. No wonder collapsing in front of the TV is the easiest thing to do with a free moment. But watching TV can actually cause more stress and depression.

Instead, make a date with yourself to explore a local park, wander through a thrift shop, visit a museum, sit in a coffee shop to read a book, or simply listen to music. We don't need to wait for a friend for a date.



### Be Wary of Scams

If you think there is something wrong with the equipment you have bought and you want to find out if it qualifies as a "lemon," call the Attorney General's office in your state. They may be able to help you in getting a replacement or a refund.

### Live Life Laughing!

How's life treating you?

It's not, I'm paying my own way!



### Inspiration

*It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.*

*~Charles Darwin*

### Don't Fall – Be Safe

Choose a cane that has a wrist strap that can also be used to hang on a chair or bedpost or select a cane with a hooked handle grip that easily hangs from counters or furniture.

## Caregiving in The Comfort of Home®

### Our Purpose

To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride, and competence.

### Ordering Info

From the publishers of

*Caregiving in  
The Comfort of Home®*

*Caregiver Series*

available from...

CareTrust Publications LLC  
PO Box 10283, Portland, OR 97296  
800-565-1533  
or [www.comfortofhome.com](http://www.comfortofhome.com)

Comments and suggestions welcome.

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## SAFETY TIPS—Alert Systems

**Alert systems** are a good idea: at the push of a button, the system will notify a friend, caregiver, or neighbor that you need help, or call 911 or your doctor. Before shopping for an alert system, make a list of the protection features you need. There are many products on the market, so it can be difficult to choose one that meets the needs of the person in your care—and is still affordable. Be wary of monthly fees or long-term contracts associated with some alert systems. Each of these products offers different features, such as range of service, medication dispensers, GPS tracking, or fall detection. See an alert system comparison at: <http://medical-alert-systems-review.toptenreviews.com/>

Features to look for include 24/7 help at the push of a button, no start-up costs, no cancellation fees, no long-term contracts, and low monthly costs. A system that is easy to install (for example, by plugging it into a phone line or wall receptacle using a power adapter) is a bonus. Look for free shipping, online discounts, and customer support.

NEXT ISSUE... BETTER COMMUNICATION IN ALZHEIMER'S CARE

# Caregiver Assistance News

“ C A R I N G F O R Y O U ... C A R I N G F O R O T H E R S ”

## Q U I C K Q U I Z

Special aids are available to help make life easier and more comfortable for people with physical limitations. Read the issue and answer True or False to the following questions.

1. Occupational therapists can consult on low-cost substitutes for expensive equipment.  
T F
2. Many people have some physical limitations, whether these involve moving, seeing, hearing, communicating.  
T F
3. If your equipment turns out to be a “lemon,” nothing can be done to get a refund.  
T F
4. Before shopping for an alert system, make a list of the protection features you need from an alert system.  
T F
5. When purchasing equipment, the advice of a sales person is better than the advice from an occupational therapist in making a decision.  
T F
6. With appropriate doctor’s orders and documentation, Medicare or private insurance covers some equipment.  
T F
7. It is important to assess medical, social, and environmental factors to make a good decision on what equipment the person in your care needs.  
T F
8. Eating aids will not help a person with movement limitations eat their meals more easily.  
T F
9. Influenza is a serious disease that can lead to hospitalization and sometimes even death.  
T F
10. Dressing aids help a person dress without bending over and make buttoning clothes easier.  
T F

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_