What to Check When Choosing a Fall Detection Alarm for an Older Adult in Remuera

Understanding fall detection and why it matters

Falls are a leading cause of injury among older adults. A fall detection alarm can make the difference between a quick response and a long wait for help. These devices use sensors to detect a fall and automatically alert someone who can assist. But not all alarms work the same way, and choosing one requires a clear look at how it fits the person who will wear it. This article walks through the key points to check so you can make an informed decision for yourself or a family member living in Remuera or anywhere in New Zealand.

How automatic fall detection works

Most fall detection alarms rely on an impact sensor and a motion sensor inside a wearable device. When the device detects a sudden change in movement or a hard impact, it triggers an emergency alert. Some models send the alert to a response centre, while others notify family members directly. The device typically includes a button the wearer can press to call for help manually, and the automatic fall detection adds a safety net if the person is unable to press the button.

It helps to understand that no sensor is perfect. A fast, hard fall is easier to detect than a slow, sideways slide out of a chair. Some devices also mistake a sudden stop in a car or a dropped device for a fall, leading to a false alarm. When reviewing a fall detection alarm, ask how the manufacturer handles false alarms and whether the device learns the wearer's usual movement patterns over time.

Check the alert method and who gets notified

An automatic fall is useless if no one receives the alert. Some systems call a central response centre that then contacts family or emergency services. Others send the alert directly to nominated contacts by SMS or phone call. Consider what fits the older adult's situation. If they live alone, a direct call to family or a neighbour may be faster than a call centre that then triages the alert. If they have family spread across different time zones, a call centre might be more reliable because it operates 24/7.

View the location on Google Maps

Also check whether the system can call contacts in a programmed order until someone answers. This ensures the alert does not go unanswered. Some devices can also dial 111

directly if no one responds. That feature adds a layer of security for people who live alone or whose contacts may be unavailable during certain hours.



Wearability and comfort

A fall detection alarm that sits in a drawer is no help at all. The device must be comfortable enough to wear every day, all day. Most come with multiple attachment options: a lanyard for the neck, a wristband, a belt clip, an armband, or even a keyring attachment for those who prefer not to wear it on their body. Think about the person's daily routine. Do they change clothes often during the day? Do they bathe or shower alone? The device should be waterproof or water-resistant so it can be worn in the bathroom, where many falls occur.

Test the weight and size of the device before committing. Some older adults find a pendant too bulky or a wristband too tight. A device that is easy to forget about is the one that will actually be worn.

Familyr is also on YouTube.

Coverage area and mobility

Fall detection alarms vary in how far they reach. Some work only within the home because they rely on a base station connected to a landline or Wi-Fi. Others use mobile network coverage, so the alarm works wherever there is compatible signal. This matters if the older adult is active and leaves the house regularly, whether for a walk in the neighbourhood, a visit to the Remuera shops, or a trip to see family. A device that works on the go provides consistent protection.

Check whether the device uses GPS location sharing. If the wearer falls outside the home, GPS helps responders find them quickly. This is especially useful for people who enjoy walking or gardening and may be out of sight of the house.

Battery life and charging habits

A fall detection alarm relies on battery power. Some devices use rechargeable batteries that need weekly charging, while others use disposable batteries that last months. The trade-off is convenience versus reliability. A rechargeable device may be forgotten on the charger, leaving the person unprotected. A device with a long-life battery gives peace of mind but requires the wearer to remember to check the battery level periodically.



Look for an alarm that gives a clear low-battery warning, either through a sound, a light, or an alert sent to a family member. Some systems even send a notification to the nominated contacts when the battery is low.

False alarms and how the system handles them

No fall detection system is immune to false alarms. A dropped device, a sudden movement in a car, or even a vigorous sneeze can sometimes trigger a fall alert. False alarms can be annoying for both the wearer and the people receiving the alerts. Some devices allow a short cancellation window after a fall is detected, during which the wearer can cancel the alert if it was a mistake. This reduces unnecessary worry.

Ask whether the system learns from false alarms over time to reduce their frequency. Also check whether the nominated contacts can be updated easily, so the right people receive the alert when a real fall occurs.

Two-way voice communication

Two-way voice calling is a feature worth considering. It lets the person at the other end of the alert speak directly to the wearer through the device. This can help assess the situation before sending help. For example, if the wearer has fallen but is able to talk, they can explain what happened and whether they need an ambulance or just help getting up. Two-way voice also reassures the wearer that someone is listening and will take action.

No ongoing monitoring fees

Many fall detection systems charge a monthly or annual monitoring fee on top of the device cost. Some providers, such as Familyr, offer alarms with no ongoing monitoring fee. This can make a significant difference to the total cost over time. When comparing options, factor in both the upfront price and any recurring charges. A device that seems cheap initially may become expensive over a few years if a monitoring fee applies.



Support and setup

Setting up a fall detection alarm should be straightforward. Some devices require pairing with a smartphone app, while others work out of the box with minimal configuration. Consider who will set up the device and whether they are comfortable with technology. Lifetime support from the provider can be helpful if questions arise later.

Familyr, a New Zealand-owned provider based in Remuera, offers personal medical alarms with automatic fall detection, GPS location sharing, and two-way voice calling. The alarms work at home and away wherever compatible mobile coverage is available, and they send alerts by SMS to up to ten nominated contacts. The device can be worn with a lanyard, wristband, belt clip, armband, or keyring attachment. For more information, you can contact Familyr at 14 Grand View Road, Remuera, Auckland 1050, New Zealand, phone +64 9 872 0345.