

Emergency Response Redefined: A Guide For Caregivers



A note from our CEO:

Caring for a loved one – no matter what the age or circumstance – is one of life’s most rewarding jobs. As many of us at MobileHelp are caregivers ourselves, we know it is a labor of love – filled with both hard work and moments of joy. We also know it can be a source of worry, wondering if your loved one has all the support they need.

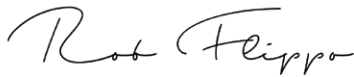
Our goal has always been to provide products and services that help lighten the load, so there can be more of the rewarding moments and less of the ones filled with concern.

When someone becomes a customer of ours, we always welcome them to our MobileHelp family. We want you to know we’ll always treat them that way – from providing the right level of customer support to diligently providing the right resources if they ever need it.

In the pages that follow, we’ve pulled together some resources, tips and considerations as you look to provide a more comprehensive safety net for the person (or persons) you love.

We’re here for them – and for you.

Best regards,



Rob Flippo
CEO, MobileHelp

This Guide Includes

- Straight Talk: Falls and Fall Prevention
- Creating a Safe Home Environment
- Tips for Caregiving
- Resources for Caregivers

Straight Talk: Falls and Fall Prevention

An interview with Rob Flippo, CEO of MobileHelp, about technology innovation to address falls and fall prevention.

Q: What are some of the advances in technology for fall prevention you are seeing in the marketplace?

A: When you're talking about fall prevention, there are two aspects for consideration: the first (and in my mind most important) is **risk assessment**.

Understanding if you are at risk for falling allows you to devise a strategy around preventing that type of an emergency. And risk assessment can be as simple as looking at lifestyle and medical factors, with an understanding of the primary issues that cause falls. For example, we know one reason people fall is due to medication errors. If you have a series of medications you manage, that should factor into your personal risk assessment.

The second aspect of fall prevention is mitigating that known risk by **incorporating devices designed for safety**. Anyone identified as a person who is high-risk can incorporate aspects of safety into their living spaces. I mentioned earlier that medication error accounts for a large portion of falls: there are now high-tech solutions that help people manage their medications – from “smart” pill bottles to PERS systems that incorporate medication reminders. On the low-tech side, grab bars, hand rails, and step stools can be installed to incorporate safety elements into the home.

Q: How can these innovations help after a fall has occurred?

A: If a person has had a fall, the risk of a subsequent fall is 50 percent more likely in the next six months. In this case, incorporating the components we discussed above – from risk assessment to implementation of safety support – is critical to rebuilding strength.

If a person has a fall, getting help in the first hour increases survival rates by 6 times. Having an emergency response device or support systems in place can mean the difference between a quick trip to the ER versus several days in the hospital.



Rob Flippo
CEO, MobileHelp

Q: Why is it important to prevent falls before they happen?

A: Falls are the number one cause of injury and death among older adults, and the cost of treating and managing falls represents one of the largest costs to the healthcare system, as well as to patients and families.

For this reason, the healthcare and technology industries have come together over the past decade to look at fall prevention in the way I previously described: assess risk and design solutions to address the risk.

Q: What role do certain medications play in falls? How can medication reminders assist in preventing falls?

A: As I've mentioned, medication errors account for about 60 percent of all fall emergencies – either due to missing a dose or doubling up on one. Medication reminders can help people manage their medications, and anyone who has been on a medication knows how complex it can be to manage just one or two. Managing five or six only exacerbates the issue exponentially.

Our medication reminder program allows people to add medications to their personal account online and set times to have their medical alert system remind them to take their meds.

Q: Is the attitude shifting around fall prevention and fall prevention devices?

A: At the professional level, the healthcare providers and hospitals we work with are deeply aware of the importance related to fall prevention and are starting to implement fall management programs on a system-wide scale.

At the consumer level, patients at home may or may not be willing to admit to they have had a fall out of embarrassment or fear around loss of independence. This is where I feel the technology industry can really step in to help – there are solutions on the marketplace now that are tablet-based (which the grandkids will envy when they see them) as well as tech-savvy devices (such as smartwatches and other smart wearables) that not only address the stigma attached to emergency response devices, but allow patients to track other aspects of their lives, from activity levels to heart rate to sleep.

Ultimately, the combined drive from both the technology and healthcare industries will provide a more comprehensive solution for patients and their providers to address fall prevention.

Creating a Safe Home Environment

Below we've assembled a few tips to help people who are moving an aging parent or loved one into their home or helping them age in place in their own home.

Consider hiring a specialist: An occupational therapist, physical therapist, geriatric care manager or other [certified aging-in-place specialist](#) can provide a home assessment to recommend modifications that will make it safer. You can also check out the Department of Veterans Affairs tip sheets on [modifications for a specific diagnosis](#).

Look to universal design: Incorporating elements that are stylish, comfortable and safe for all ages is a great way to create an environment that works well for anyone. These can include such things as:

- Zero-threshold entryways.
- Offset door hinges to make room for a wheelchair, walker or two people walking side by side.
- Controls and switches that are reachable from a wheelchair or bed.
- A waterproof seat in the shower.
- Textured no-slip strips in slippery areas, such as the bathtub/shower.
- Switch out standard doorknobs for lever handles.
- Move laundry facilities to the first floor.



Check for Tripping Hazards: Every year, one in three adults over the age 65 experiences a fall. To mitigate the risk:

- Remove small throw rugs and repair loose carpeting
- Use rubber-backed bathmats.
- Put nonskid treads on steps.
- Keep steps clear.
- Apply nonslip wax to floors.
- Move small (and low) furniture.
- Clear electric cords and clutter.
- Add a hall railing.



Light it Up: As we age, we need more light. You can look to install:

- Bright lights in hallways, closets and stairwells.
- Extra lamps — consider models that turn on and off with a touch.
- Outdoor motion sensor lights and path lights.

Assess the kitchen/cooking areas: A few things to monitor on an ongoing basis:

- Put frequently used items on an easy-to-reach refrigerator shelf.
- Consider using automatic devices to turn off the stove and oven or installing an induction cooktop — which turns off when a pot is removed from the burner.
- Hang a fire extinguisher within reach.
- Install smoke and carbon monoxide alarms in your loved one's bedroom and test existing alarms on a regular basis.

Stay Connected: If your loved one is home alone, you can stay in touch regularly with a video-chat app, smart speaker system or messaging platform.

Tips for Caregiving

As we've said, caregiving is a labor of love: Here are five tips from AARP to help you provide the best care possible.

1. Understand how much care is really needed: Make a list of all the things you're doing for your older adult. Is help needed during the day? At night? Is frequent or constant supervision needed?

2. Be realistic about the care you're able to provide without harming your own health:

With a written assessment, you can evaluate the difference between the amount of care needed and the amount of care you can realistically provide.

3. Get extra caregiving help: Keep looking for different ways to save time and get tasks off your to do list:

- Ask family members to commit to helping out on a regular schedule.
- Enroll your senior in an adult day program.
- Hire in-home caregiving help.
- Find a volunteer senior companion program in your area.
- Use a respite care service.
- Automate as many errands as possible.

4. Share the caregiving responsibility: Having family members share responsibility will lessen the workload for you: Here are [some helpful tips](#) on how to ask family to help with caregiving.

5. Reduce financial pressure: Caring for an older adult can be expensive; you can reduce caregiving costs using the following tools:

- There are ways to [save money on medical bills](#) and reduce the cost of [prescription drugs](#).
- You can also search for government [programs that help pay for caregiving expenses](#).

Resources for Caregivers

The following organizations, groups and agencies offer caregivers a variety of resources, ranging from support services and webinars to tip sheets, care guides and how-to videos.

AARP Family Caregiving

www.aarp.org/caregiving/

Find free care guides, legal checklists, care options and an online community that supports all types of family caregivers.

Alzheimer's Association

www.alz.org

800-272-3900

Information and support for people with Alzheimer's disease and their caregivers. Operates a 24/7 helpline and offers care navigator tools.

Alzheimers.gov

www.alzheimers.gov

The government's free information resource about Alzheimer's disease and related dementias.

ARCH National Respite Network and Resource Center

www.archrespite.org

Find programs and services that allow caregivers to get a break from caring for a loved one.

Caregiver Action Network

www.caregiveraction.org

Formerly known as the National Family Caregivers Association, it provides information and education for family caregivers, including a volunteer support network in over 40 states.

Community Resource Finder

www.communityresourcefinder.org

Easy access to a comprehensive listing of Alzheimer's and dementia resources, community programs and services.

Eldercare Locator

www.eldercare.gov

800-677-1116

Connects caregivers to local services and resources for older adults and adults with disabilities across the United States.

Family Caregiver Alliance

www.caregiver.org

800-445-8106

Information, education and services for family caregivers, including the Family Care Navigator, a state-by-state list of services and assistance.

Hospice Foundation of America

www.hospicefoundation.org

800-854-3402

Provides information on issues related to hospice and end-of-life care

Medicare

www.medicare.gov

800-Medicare

Provides information about the parts of Medicare, what's new and how to find Medicare plans, facilities or providers.

National Alliance for Caregiving

www.caregiving.org

A coalition of national organizations focused on family caregiving issues.

National Institute on Aging Information Center

www.nia.nih.gov

800-222-2225

Research leader on aging issues; information on common age-related health problems.

The National Clearinghouse for Long-term Care Information

www.longtermcare.gov

Information and tools to plan for future long-term care needs.

Social Security Administration

www.socialsecurity.gov

800-772-1213

Information on retirement and disability benefits, including how to sign up.

State Health Insurance Assistance Program

www.shiptacenter.org

A program that offers one-on-one insurance counseling and assistance to people with Medicare and their families.

Veterans Administration

www.caregiver.va.gov

855-260-3274

Support and services for families caring for veterans. Maintains a VA caregiver support line.

Well Spouse Association

www.wellspouse.org

800-838-0879

Provides support for spousal caregivers.

