

• TELECARE FACTSHEET

There is an increasing range of devices that use a variety of sensors fitted around the home to monitor activity by the occupant or changes in 'normal' activity. The sensors are linked via a telephone line to a nominated person or a call centre. By monitoring the person's activities the system can detect potential problems and trigger an alarm to a relative, carer, neighbour or emergency services. This is referred to as telecare.

Sensors can be used to detect factors such as:

- Normal daily activity eg. flushing the toilet, turning on taps, opening the fridge. If these actions don't take place at the 'normal' time a response can be made.
- Getting out of bed at night – bed occupancy sensors or pressure-mat sensors placed by the bed can activate an alarm when the person gets up in the night, e.g. to alert a carer.
- Floods – when sensors are fitted on skirting boards or floors in kitchens or bathrooms, if the taps are left running and cause a flood, the system will shut off the water and raise the alarm. Specially designed plugs can also be used to prevent floods from taps that have been left running.
- Extreme temperatures – sensors send a warning signal if a room temperature is very low or very high, or if the temperature suddenly goes up. In the kitchen, for example, this could detect a pan that has boiled dry. It can also detect if the temperature in a room is so low there may be a risk of hypothermia.
- Gas – sensors detect if someone forgets to turn the gas off, and a device will automatically shut this off and raise the alarm.
- Falls – sensors worn on the hip can detect the impact of a person falling.
- Unexpected absence from a bed or chair – if someone doesn't get up in the morning, a bed or chair occupancy system can raise an alarm.

To find a telecare operator near you, see the Telecare Services Association's (TSA) website.

There is also a growing range of equipment or Assistive Technology (AT) that can make independent day to day living easier e.g. enabling washing, dressing, cooking and eating.

Controlling who can come into and out of the home can be especially useful. One of the most commonly used pieces of equipment is a 'Keysafe'. This is a small, secure box which is fitted outside the home to contain the front door key. It can be opened by people ie. relatives and carers, who know the secure number code set for that specific safe. Fitting a door entry system is another (but more expensive) alternative, reducing the need to get up to answer the door if your mobility is limited.

Whilst making sure that doors and windows have good, secure locks, the reduced grip and dexterity that can result from arthritis means that you also need to make sure that you can still operate these. You can get key turners that fit onto ordinary keys and make these easier to turn; or, you could replace the lock with a push button lock which you open and close either by entering a code onto a keypad or by swiping a card (like those used in hotel rooms).