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Lifestation Review

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Lifestation

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Our Verdict

Lifestation is a medical alert monitoring system that offers an in-home device and two different

on-the-go mobile devices. The devices allow people to contact help in case of an emergency and give caregivers peace of mind as older adults live independently. While there are limitations to the system, Lifestation can be a positive addition to an older adult's care plan.

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Key Features

- Plans include 24/7 access to certified care specialists at monitoring centers in New Jersey and Texas
- Location monitoring technology allows you to locate your loved one quickly
- Partners with Uber Health to offer transportation to medical appointments

Lifestation is a medical alert monitoring system and telehealth technology service for older adults that offers both in-home and on-the-go mobile systems. The company provides emergency alert systems to help older adults live independently and safely in their own homes, all while giving loved ones and caregivers peace of mind and an additional sense of security.

There are three Lifestation products: the in-home medical alert system, the Sidekick mobile medical alert system and the Sidekick Smart wearable medical alert system. Aside from offering older adults a way to get emergency help quickly and easily if needed, Lifestation has a slew of convenient features, such as fall detection, a partnership with PAPA Pals that offers help from trained companions for outings, an Alexa integration and location detection that allows caregivers to find their loved ones quickly.

PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 5-day battery life ● Can integrate with Amazon Alexa ● Fall detection available ● Location detection available on mobile devices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In-home device has a range of just 500 feet ● Fewer add-on options than competing brands ● Difficult to find cost breakdown and details about the service on the company website

Lifestation at a Glance

- **Plan options:** There are three plan options (standard, select and supreme), each of which comes with slightly different features.
- **Fall detection:** This feature appears to be available for any of the three Lifestation devices so long as you subscribe to the supreme monthly monitoring package.
- **Average monthly costs:** Monthly plan costs vary depending on the type of device and plan you choose. Costs range from about \$35 to \$45 per month.

How It Works

Lifestation offers both in-home and mobile medical alert systems with personal plans starting at \$32.95 each month. These plans include 24/7 access to certified care specialists at monitoring centers in New Jersey and Texas.

In the event of an emergency, users press the help button to connect with a specially trained Lifestation care specialist, who can then contact the proper emergency response team for assistance. If the user is unable to speak, they can still press the button and a care specialist will connect them with a preselected contact they provide during system setup. The company offers translation services in Spanish and many other languages. Dispatch protocols are personalized, meaning care specialists don't automatically call 911. Rather, they can instead contact preselected family members and friends.

The in-home medical alert system comes with a base station and a lightweight and waterproof help button that can be worn on the wrist or as a pendant necklace. This button works with a landline within a range of 500 feet of the home or Lifestation-provided AT&T 4G LTE cellular service with a range of 600 feet of the base station. The device has an extra loud speaker and a sensitive microphone that make it ideal for people with hearing loss. The system is designed to be very easy to use and install—simply plug in the device and call to test it before using it.

The Sidekick mobile medical device is meant to promote freedom and flexibility, as it's designed to offer help when users are out and about. The device is small, lightweight and water-resistant (it can be worn in the shower as long as it's not submerged). Using a combination of GPS and WiFi signals, it uses enhanced location technology to track the user's exact location, with 24/7 emergency services available so they can be found quickly.

The Sidekick Smart wearable medical alert looks like a stylish smartwatch but has all the benefits of a medical alert system. The water-resistant device allows users to call for help, but it also tracks steps, monitors heart rate and checks the weather. This device has enhanced location technology, using a combination of GPS, WiFi and Bluetooth signals to deliver accurate location data. The watch offers two-way communication that enables users to speak directly into the watch to contact the U.S.-based emergency monitoring center. Unlike Lifestation's other devices, the smartwatch should be charged daily.

There is also a Luxury wearable device for older adults who want an option that looks more like jewelry and less like a run-of-the-mill medical alert device. The Luxury device has a brass case with rhodium-colored plating with a lapis blue resin stone hanging on a brass chain with an easy magnet closure.

Lifestation also has some partnerships that offer convenient and helpful features, including:

- **Amazon Alexa.** Lifestation devices can be connected to an Amazon Alexa device, allowing caregivers to track their loved one's location in real time. You can access device location information 24/7 at home with the Amazon Echo or on your smartphone using the Alexa app.
- **PAPA Pals.** PAPA Pals consists of trained and vetted companions who can offer older adults companionship and support for outings, such as grocery shopping and medical appointments.
- **Uber.** Care specialists can work with Uber Health to help older adults set up rides to get them to and from medical appointments.
- **Find My Loved One.** The Find My Loved One service allows caregivers to locate their loved ones at any time with a simple text message—as long as the mobile device is being worn, a quick text to the service immediately identifies its location. This service can be used with the Sidekick mobile device and Sidekick Smart watch.

Lifestation offers a 30-day money-back guarantee, which allows users a full refund if they're unhappy with the system.

The Cost

Lifestation's medical alert equipment (the devices and the base station) is free—users simply pay the monthly monitoring fee for the plan they choose. The monthly payments might be tax deductible, although the company recommends speaking to a tax representative to confirm this

detail.

It's difficult to find the cost and details of each plan on the Lifestation website. Costs aren't advertised, and there doesn't appear to be a webpage that breaks down what each plan includes.

When I called the customer service number for a more detailed cost breakdown, I was told that pricing can vary depending on the user's private insurance, Medicare or Medicaid coverage and that prices listed for the plans on the website are personal plan prices (rather than for multiple people). When I asked what each plan included, agents told me I could speak with them about what I was looking for and they could discuss the options that would work best for me.

There are three plan options for each device: standard, select and supreme. I was only able to find starting prices on the Lifestation website for the in-home device and Sidekick smartwatch. Monitoring service for the in-home device starts at \$32.95 per month, and monitoring service for the Sidekick smartwatch starts at \$43.95 per month. I was able to see all three pricing options for the Sidekick mobile device—\$37.95 for standard, \$43.95 for select and \$49.95 for supreme. It's unclear whether the differences in these information displays is a website glitch.

There are no long-term contracts attached to the Lifestation systems, and you can cancel at any time with no fee. You can be billed monthly, quarterly or annually depending on what works best for you.

The Fine Print

According to the Lifestation website, the average response time of a call center representative after a user presses the medical alert button is about 20 seconds. The company recommends monthly tests to ensure the device is working properly.

Some essential information about Lifestation is missing from the website—mainly cost and pricing information. I found it strange that it doesn't provide a cost breakdown for the monthly plans or the add-on features. While I could see that there were three types of plans (standard, select and supreme), I couldn't find any information on what was actually included in each type or why, for example, supreme costs so much more than standard. There's no breakdown of what each plan includes for customers to browse.

If you click the "buy now" button, you're prompted to select which device you want, then which type of plan you want—but with no information on what each plan includes, how is one supposed to pick the plan that works best for them? While you can purchase directly from the website, it doesn't make sense to do that when you don't know what you're buying. Calling the customer service number seems like the only way to gather that information.

Also, if you click the "buy now" button and then select which device you want, you're prompted to select add-on options for extra monthly fees. Most of these add-ons, which aren't mentioned elsewhere on the website, include:

- Bathroom and/or hallway buttons. These small buttons easily attach to the wall and can be pressed during an emergency for extra protection for \$2.95 per month.
- A lockbox: Use this box to give first responders access to your home during emergencies for \$2.95 per month.
- Access to PAPA Pals. Trained companions can assist with outings for \$5 per month. (There's no additional information on how this service works.)
An extra button. This second button for the user or an additional user costs \$3.95 per month.
- A protection plan: Lifestation will replace the device if it stops working due to hardware or technical issues. (This protection seems to be included in the select and supreme plans for each device but may incur an additional fee for the standard plan, although that isn't clear.)
- Fall detection. The device automatically contacts the monitoring center when it detects a fall. This feature seems to be included in the supreme plan for each device, but it isn't clear whether you can add it to the others for an additional fee.

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(Note: Product details and price are accurate as of publication and are subject to change.)

What Experts Say

Medical alert systems like Lifestation can sometimes come off as gimmicky, but experts say they can be a positive addition to any older adult's care plan. "The best medical alert systems can provide vital support for older adults and add an extra layer of comfort and reassurance for the family, especially if the [person] doesn't have a full-time caregiver," says Kuljit Kapur, D.O., chief medical officer at Transitions Care, a primary care service that offers end-of-life care and symptom management. These devices also give older adults the freedom and versatility to be more independent while staying safe.

In Dr. Kapur's opinion, Lifestation (and comparable medical alert devices) can be worth the money. She notes that the Sidekick and Sidekick Smart are fairly affordable options that can bring caregivers comfort and security, making them worth the investment, especially if the user is living alone and doesn't have a caregiver throughout the day. This 24/7 monitoring, she says, is the main benefit of Lifestation. "Other features, such as location services and a pedometer, also make Lifestation's products appealing to [users] and families," she says.

On the other hand, Dr. Kapur notes products like Lifestation can be difficult to use with older adults who have no interest in wearing them. She stresses the importance of having family members ensure that the older adult is wearing, using and charging the product.

"Another downside to think about is that Lifestation doesn't provide care on a regular basis and is moreso a tool to inform care providers," she says. In other words: It's helpful, but only to a certain extent.

According to Jennifer Adams Avila, a certified dementia practitioner and executive director at Custom Home Care, a home nursing agency based in Chicago, one of the biggest advantages of Lifestation is the fall detection optional add-on feature. "The beauty of the fall detection technology of Lifestation is that it's a passive response to an emergency situation," she explains. "A quick response time can drastically improve an older adult's chance of recovery and can even be the difference between life and death." She notes that this feature is especially helpful because many older adults are unable to use the button in life-threatening emergencies or simply don't want to because they don't want to bother anyone.

She also notes that the luxury option for the pendant is another potential advantage. "Baby boomers have the money and resources to select adaptive equipment that works with their personal aesthetic," says Adams Avila. "Lifestation has an option of a pendant that looks like a piece of jewelry rather than the standard utilitarian alert systems we have used in the industry for decades. It's more likely that older adults will use an attractive device more consistently, which is key to the effectiveness of any emergency response system."

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

- + **How much do Lifestation alert systems cost?**
- + **Are Lifestation alert systems worth it?**
- + **Are Lifestation alert systems easy to set up and use?**

Sources

- + **References**

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