

Health and personal safety – prompts, reminders, and medication aids

We all get forgetful from time to time but for some of us, remembering important things like when to take medication, can be a challenge.

However, there are several TEC (Technology Enabled Care) devices available that can offer additional support by providing visual, verbal and/or audible reminders and prompts for things like:

- Remembering to take medication on time or go to a doctor's appointment
- Knowing the date and time and distinguishing between day and night
- Remembering to eat and drink regularly or at specific times
- Remembering mobility aid, keys, purse, etc., when going out

Devices that play set reminders

These devices allow tailored reminders or prompts to be set according to individual needs. Some also come with the ability to add personalised voice recordings (e.g., by a family member, friend, or carer) that mean a more familiar and friendly voice is heard when a reminder is activated, e.g., reminding you to take medication at set times throughout the day.

Many also provide the option to allow remote access to the device through smartphones and tablets, so that reminders can be added or amended as and when needed.



- **Clock and calendar apps** can be download to a smartphone or tablet (if not already installed) and set-up to meet your individual specific needs, e.g., customising the layout of the calendar and clock, and choosing if the alarm will be a noise, a flashing light, or a vibration. You can use these to set one-off or regular events, such as to remind you to take medication, have a drink, get some lunch, attend a doctor's appointment, etc. When the alarm goes off you can either cancel it or select to snooze so that you will be reminded again after a set length of time, e.g., every 5 minutes.



- **Multi-alarm wristwatches** use vibrating and/or audible prompts to remind the wearer when something needs to be done, e.g., to take medication. Some can also provide on-screen messages. Multi-alarm wristwatches vary from basic watch-type models through to personal alarm style watches, specifically designed for the elderly or vulnerable. These models may also include mobile and GPS (Global Positioning System) technologies that enable features such as GPS locating, geo-fencing and fall detectors.



- **Memory prompting alarm calendar clocks** (such as the range of MemRabel devices used by Bristol City Council) are digital media players that display the time like a normal clock but also allow you to set daily time reminders. They are particularly useful for people with Dementia, Alzheimer's, memory loss, learning difficulties, cognitive impairment, or Autism. Reminders can be personalised to play voice recorded messages, picture messages, video reminder messages, or a combination of all three, so for example, one of your children could record a message reminding you to have your lunch and display their photo at the same time.



- **Smart devices and virtual assistants** (such as Amazon Alexa or Google Assistant) can be programmed to provide reminders about appointments or when to take medication. They range in design and features, but most can be voice activated, meaning you can talk to them to ask them things, such as if you want to know the time, etc, meaning they are ideal for those with limited dexterity in their hands or for those with visual impairments.

Devices that detect motion



These use a sensor or pressure mat and can either raise an alert or play a pre-recorded voice message when they detect movement. For example, you could set one of these to play a message when you walk out of the kitchen to remind you to turn off the gas, or to remind you to take your keys and mobile phone when leaving the home.

Medication Aids

There are lots of different aids and devices available specifically designed to help with remembering to take the right amount of medication at the right time, from simple pill boxes to automatic and Telecare monitored services that raise an alert if you forget to take a dose at the right time. You may also like to consider telephone reminder services or apps that can be set-up to provide reminders.

However, it should be noted that any of the following types of pill box will need to be filled on a regular basis. For example, weekly or monthly, according to the amount of medication you need to take and the frequency. Some pharmacies may offer a refilling service where they fill your pillbox for you at the same time as collecting your prescription, but it may be easier and more reliable for a trusted family member or friend to do this for you.



- **Dosette boxes** are simple pill boxes or pill organisers. They have separate compartments for days of the week and times of day, to make it clear when each dose should be taken. At the start of the week, someone would need to organise your medication so that the right tablets are securely placed in the right compartments. Some also allow alerts to be set so that you can receive an audible reminder when the next dose of medication is due (these would be provided by BCC (Bristol City Council) but can be purchased from Pharmacies and other suppliers)



- **Automatic pill dispensers** also have individual compartments but are pre-filled and locked. When it is time to take medication, the dispenser sets off an audible and visual alarm and the right compartment opens providing access to the correct pills. The dispenser will not present another medication dose until the next programmed alarm time. Some can be set so that the alarm will continue to go off until the pills are removed, or raise an alert if medication is not taken or there is a problem with the device such as a low battery (see below).



- **Monitored medication reminders** are like automatic pill dispensers but are linked to a call centre. If your medication is not taken at a set time, an alert will be raised, and you will be phoned by the Telecare monitoring centre and given a reminder to take your medication. If the monitoring centre is unable to contact you, they will arrange for someone to visit and check you are ok. For more information, please see "[Telecare](#)."

PillTime



Another service of interest and is free to all NHS (National Health Service) England patients, is PillTime. Although this is not strictly a medication reminder device, for those with enough capacity, it can help to reduce the chances of missing a dose or taking the wrong medication at the wrong time. You would need to order your prescriptions online and PillTime will organise your medicine into pouches according to what you need to take and when you need to take it. Each pouch is clearly labelled with the exact contents and the time and date it needs to be taken, e.g., Thursday morning, Thursday evening, etc.