Checking on ageing parents: in-person visits or remote alerts

When parents grow older, the question of how to keep an eye on their wellbeing often comes up. Many adult children live in a different suburb or city, while others are close by but cannot be there every hour. The traditional solution has been to visit regularly, but remote monitoring tools now offer a different kind of reassurance. Each approach has its strengths, and the right choice depends on your parent's health, their living situation, and what they feel comfortable with.

The case for regular home visits

A visit lets you see for yourself how your parent is managing. You can check whether the fridge has fresh food, whether the laundry is being done, and whether the house looks as tidy as it usually does. These small signs often tell you more than a phone call ever could. A parent who sounds cheerful on the phone might be struggling with a task they used to find easy, and you would not know unless you were there.

Visits also give you time for a proper conversation. Over a cup of tea you can talk about how they are sleeping, whether they have been to the doctor, and whether any new aches or pains are bothering them. For many older adults, this face-to-face contact is a highlight of the week. It fights loneliness and keeps them connected to family life.

The downside is that visits take time and energy. If you work full time or have young children, making the trip several times a week may not be realistic. And even if you visit every day, there are still hours in between when something could go wrong. A fall, a sudden illness, or a moment of confusion can happen at any time, and no amount of visiting can cover every minute.

What remote alerts can offer

Remote monitoring fills the gaps between visits. A personal medical alarm worn as a pendant or wristband lets your parent call for help at the press of a button. More advanced devices also detect falls automatically, so help can be summoned even if your parent cannot press the button. Some models include a GPS medical alarm that works outside the home, giving your parent the freedom to go for a walk, visit a friend, or do their shopping while staying connected to support.



Two way voice communication built into the device means your parent can speak directly to a response team or to family members without needing to reach a phone. This is especially useful if they have fallen and cannot get up. The responder can talk them through what is happening and arrange the help that is needed.

For family members, the peace of mind is significant. Instead of worrying all day, you can check in remotely or receive alerts when something happens. You do not have to drop everything to drive over and see if everything is okay. The device does the watching, and you get on with your day.

When in-person visits work best

Home visits are ideal when your parent is generally healthy but needs a bit of practical support. You might help with heavy cleaning, take them to appointments, or simply enjoy a meal together. Visits also work well when your parent is not comfortable with technology. Some older adults find wearable devices intrusive or confusing, and no amount of explaining will convince them to wear one. In that case, your presence is the best safety net you can provide.

If your parent has mild memory issues, visits also let you spot changes early. You might notice they are forgetting to take medication, leaving the stove on, or getting lost in familiar places.

These are things a remote device cannot always pick up, especially if your parent is not wearing it or has taken it off.

The main limitation is that visits cannot be constant. Even with the best intentions, there will be times when you are at work, asleep, or simply too far away to respond quickly. A fall that happens at 2am could mean your parent lies on the floor for hours until you arrive in the morning.

When remote alerts add the most value

Remote monitoring shines when your parent lives alone, has a higher risk of falling, or has a medical condition that could change suddenly. It is also valuable if you live far away. A device with GPS location means you can see where your parent is, which is reassuring if they tend to wander or if they enjoy walking but you worry about them getting lost.

For older adults who value their independence, a wearable alarm can be a better option than moving in with family or into assisted living. It lets them keep their daily routine, go out when they please, and still have a safety net. The **GPS medical alarm** feature is particularly helpful here, because it extends protection beyond the home. Your parent is not stuck inside waiting for someone to check on them; they can live their life and know that help is available if needed.

Family support is also easier with remote alerts. Instead of calling every few hours to ask "Are you okay?", you can glance at a smartphone app or wait for an alert. This reduces the pressure on both sides. Your parent does not feel watched, and you do not feel anxious.



Combining both approaches

For many families, the best solution is not one or the other but a combination. Regular visits provide the human connection and the practical help that no device can replace. Remote alerts fill the gaps, giving you peace of mind between visits and ensuring that help arrives quickly in an emergency.

A typical arrangement might look like this: you visit twice a week for a meal and a catch-up, and your parent wears a personal medical alarm the rest of the time. If they fall on a Tuesday afternoon, the device alerts the response team and you get a notification. You can call them through the two way voice feature to see how they are, then decide whether to head over or let the responders handle it.

This blended approach respects your parent's independence while keeping them safe. It also takes some of the burden off you. You do not have to be on call 24/7, because the device is doing the watching.

Practical considerations

When deciding what to do, think about your parent's daily routine. Do they spend most of their time at home, or are they out and about? If they are active, a device with GPS location and fall

detection is worth considering. If they rarely leave the house, a simpler home-based alarm might be enough.

Also consider their comfort with technology. Some older adults happily wear a pendant or wristband and forget about it. Others find it annoying or take it off and leave it in a drawer. If your parent is reluctant, you might start with a device that looks like a regular watch or a piece of jewellery, which can feel less medical.

Think about who will respond when an alert is triggered. Some families rely on a monitoring service, while others set up the device to call family members directly. The right choice depends on how quickly someone can get to your parent and whether your parent prefers a stranger's voice or a familiar one in an emergency.

Finally, talk to your parent about what they want. A device that is forced on someone is less likely to be used. If they understand that it helps them stay in their own home longer and gives you less reason to worry, they are more likely to wear it consistently.



Making the choice that fits your family

There is no single right answer. Some families manage perfectly well with visits alone, especially when a parent is still active and healthy. Others find that remote alerts transform their daily life, removing a constant background worry. Many end up somewhere in between, using visits for connection and a device for backup.

The important thing is to start the conversation early, before an accident forces the decision. Talk about what each of you is comfortable with, and be open to adjusting the plan as needs change. What works at 70 may not work at 80, and what works for one parent may not work for the other.

Keeping ageing parents safe and connected is a balancing act. With a thoughtful mix of personal visits and modern alert technology, you can protect their independence while staying close in the ways that matter most.