

Press Information

HOLIDAY SEASON OFFERS OPPORTUNITY TO ASSESS IF AGING LOVED ONES ARE SAFE AT HOME

DISCREET CHECK ON ELDERLY FAMILY MEMBERS CAN PREVENT DEBILITATING FALLS

Toronto, November 28, 2008 - For many Canadian families, the joy of visiting elderly parents during the Holiday Season is often tempered by the shock they experience when they see their loved ones' noticeable decline in mobility or physical health. Philips Lifeline, a leader in helping Canadian seniors and people with chronic health conditions live independently, says Holiday family gatherings are an ideal opportunity for adult children to make a discreet check on their parents and determine whether they need extra help to remain safe at home.

Falls in particular are one of the most serious health risks among seniors over the age of 65, affecting more people than stroke and heart attacks combined. After a fall, a senior's life may never be the same. Half of those who suffer a broken hip or joint may never walk unassisted again and up to 83 per cent of seniors who have experienced a fall fear having another and reduce their physical activity as a result.¹ Even more alarming, falls are the leading cause of death due to injury in people 65 and over.²

"Once a fall occurs, a vicious cycle of increasing risk occurs as those who have fallen once develop a fear of falling," says Michelle Acorn, Nurse Practitioner, who runs a Falls Prevention Clinic. "This fear makes them less active and can cause even further physical decline, along with depression and isolation because they are afraid to go out."

"We want to encourage families to use the upcoming Holidays to do a preventative check on their elderly family members and make sure the necessary safeguards are in place so an accident does not occur," says Erik Sande, General Manager, Philips Lifeline. "Holidays are our busiest time of the year, but unfortunately, we often get called after an adult child hears Mom or Dad has had a dangerous fall at home. Adult children need to be proactive before an accident happens as it takes considerably longer to recover and the risk of losing independence is much higher after a fall."

To help caregivers determine if their aging loved ones are able to continue living independently, Philips Lifeline today releases two check lists: The **Elder Care Holiday Check List**, which provides a general checklist ranging from physical appearance to condition of their home to social activities, and **Avoiding the First Fall**, which provides a range of recommendations and tips for creating a safer home environment to help avoid dangerous falls.

One of the best ways to ensure seniors remain independent and safe at home - and to give adult children peace of mind - is to install an emergency response service. Lifeline offers an

¹ Gagnon, N. and Flint, A. "Fear of Falling in the Elderly." *Geriatrics & Aging*, July/August 2003, Vol 6. No.7

² Canadian Institute for Health Information. <http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/35781.html>

easy to use highly responsive medical alert service. Subscribers to Lifeline's medical alarm and response service wear a button as a pendant around their neck or on a wristband, which gives them access to help 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The button activates a voice response from an Associate in the Response Centre who determines within minutes whether a neighbour is needed to check in, or if emergency services are required.

"Often seniors are reluctant to accept help or change their habits. Appealing to their desire to remain living independently is often a strong motivator and helps convince them that a medical alarm and response service will provide them with the security they need," says Mr. Sande.

About Lifeline

Philips Lifeline is Canada's leading medical alarm and response service. Its commitment to providing quality and caring service has made it the industry leader for more than 30 years. Lifeline is also the only medical alarm and response service integrated with the healthcare system. With hundreds of partnerships with hospitals, healthcare agencies and senior living residences across the country, the Lifeline service is readily accessible across the country. For more information on Lifeline medical alarm and response service please visit www.Lifeline.ca.

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