



TECH LINK

Technology Plays Important Role in Helping Seniors Live Independently

For previous generations, nursing homes and assisted living facilities were typically the only options to provide safe care for the aging population. Today, there is great news for aging adults who want to continue living in their homes - there are many products and services that make staying in your home (called "aging in place") a possibility.

When safety is a concern, technological devices can give everyone involved a greater sense of security when an aging adult is living alone - or these devices can act in tandem with at-home caregiving to afford the senior greater independence when possible. While cost savings is a key benefit of not going into nursing homes or assisted care, equally as important are the benefits of living comfortably (and independently) at home.

Before we get into some of the cool new technology to enable independent living for the elderly, we first need to address internet access and Wi-Fi capabilities. Available tech innovations won't help if internet and Wi-Fi isn't reliable. Health trackers, voice command technology, and smart hubs are only as effective as a person's internet connection. For people who are aging-in-place, a great Wi-Fi system can make a huge difference for their safety, peace of mind, and well-being. Contact your local internet provider to determine if you or your aging family member has the speed needed to accomplish aging in place goals. For more information on MVEC's internet and Wi-Fi offering, visit mvec.coop.

From convenience and safety to staying engaged with family members, consider these tech options as resources for aging in place:

- **Tablets and Smartphones.** There are countless applications that can keep track of schedules and deliver reminders, provide entertainment and games, take and store photos and videos, and even track medication and medical history. The challenges of living alone aren't just logistical; tablets and smartphones can help to create much needed social interaction through video calls with family and friends and social media networks.

- **In-home Monitoring Systems.** Technology exists in the form of sensors to monitor an older adult's movement and daily habits without the use of cameras that can infringe on their privacy. Sensors placed under bed sheets can analyze how well someone is sleeping or under the carpet to track movement. Families and caregivers can monitor a loved one's safety remotely allowing for longer independence.

- **Health Monitors.** Typically come in the form of wearable devices - that can track an older adult's vitals, including blood pressure, temperature, oxygen, sleep patterns, cardiac health, blood glucose, and even hydration. These monitors can send data directly to healthcare providers to support more informed patient care.

- **Emergency Response Systems.** Personal Emergency Response Systems (PERS) have been around for quite some time, but they have become more accurate and more discreet. When an aging adult wears a PERS device, either they push a button in a case of emergency and/or the device is able to automatically detect a fall and alert emergency services and any programmed numbers of family and caregivers.

- **Medication Dispensers and Reminders.** With aging adults, it can be dangerous for them to forget a medication dose or whether they already took their medication and double their doses. In some cases, all an aging adult needs is a reminder, so phones and tablets can be set to ring and vibrate when it is time to take medications. In other cases, people need additional assistance taking the proper doses and medications - especially medications taken multiple times a day.

For many seniors living in rural America, these technological options would not be possible without access to broadband internet. If your internet needs a boost to take advantage of these aging in place technologies, contact MVEC about our MVlink high speed fiber internet (call 800-927-6068, email fiber@mvec.com or visit mvec.coop).

