

Partnership program helps get wandering dementia patients home

To alleviate stress and offer peace of mind, the Canadian MedicAlert Foundation has teamed up with the Alzheimer Society of Canada to launch the MedicAlert Safely Home program.

This program is aimed at quickly identifying those who are lost and assist in a safe return home.

Summer is a time for vacations and spending more time outdoors, but it's also a time to be extra vigilant for people who are caring for someone with Alzheimer's or some other form of dementia. People with dementia can become lost, often without warning, and have no idea how to get home. This can be a frightening experience for the lost person and their families.

Available nationwide, the program is designed to quickly identify those who are lost and assist in a safe return home.

"This new program is an essential resource for keeping people with dementia safe," observed Alzheimer Society of Canada CEO Mimi Lowi-Young. "Registering with the program is an important step family members can take in supporting people with dementia who are at risk of wandering and becoming lost. By collaborating with Canadian MedicAlert Foundation, we're answering a need which will become even more critical as our population ages and more Canadians develop this disease."

MedicAlert Safely Home members select a MedicAlert ID to wear at all times. Through a unique 24/7 emergency hotline, inscribed on the ID, first responders are granted immediate access to that person's complete medical profile, as well as emergency contact information. When a member with Alzheimer's disease or other dementia is found – even if they're unable to answer basic personal questions like where they live – MedicAlert will provide critical information and immediately notify emergency contacts.

"Anyone living with Alzheimer's disease should have a MedicAlert membership," Canadian MedicAlert Foundation CEO Robert Ridge said. "In addition to helping ensure that people with dementia can find their way safely home, the sophisticated MedicAlert database stores full medical information, including what medications they are taking, information about allergies or conditions and a record of their medical history."

Ridge added that all other reasons aside, registering for the program provides families and caregivers with invaluable peace of mind, knowing that those in their care are as safe as possible.

Julie Foley, whose husband Lowell has Alzheimer's disease, agreed.

"There is still no cure for Alzheimer's disease, so safety is absolutely essential," she said. "It's one of the first things we discussed when my husband was diagnosed. This new program is an easy and subtle support which provides both of us reassurance. Every minute counts."

Anyone registered in the MedicAlert Safely Home program will have all the benefits of a full MedicAlert membership, including:

- Fully customized lifesaving IDs – a team of MedicAlert medical editing professionals works with the family member to ensure that the information engraved on the back of the ID is as relevant and informative as possible.

- The unique 24/7 emergency hotline that gives first responder immediate access to the person's detailed MedicAlert profile.

- Immediate family and emergency contact information.

MedicAlert Safely Home membership is \$60 for one year and includes a free MedicAlert "Blue" ID for first-time registrants that's exclusive to people living with dementia. As a registered charity, MedicAlert also offers alternate payment programs, such as prepaid options and for those who cannot afford a membership, a subsidy program.

For immediate registration call 1-855-581-3794.