

Pass on the cardigan and go for the grabber

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For the 133 million Americans living with chronic conditions, the best holiday gift is something that will make navigating her daily routine easier. There are almost 40 million people age 65 and older, making up almost 13 percent of the population.

“Sweaters, pajamas, candy and perfume are all very nice, traditional and thoughtful gifts for the compromised, but if you want to really show them you are concerned about their well-being, check out your local pharmacy for gifts they’ll use every day,” said Debbie Jansky, assistant nurse manager, Home Health Services at Gottlieb Memorial Hospital.

Jansky and her team of 35 registered nurses, therapists, social workers and home health aides make about 1,600 home visits each month to those who need skilled nursing or physical therapy in their home. “It’s very sad to see patients receive gifts of expensive perfume or cardigans that they will never enjoy because they can’t open the bottle or unbutton the buttons,” Jansky said.

“These are the items I recommend regularly, and are used and appreciated every day,” she said.

Here are Jansky’s top picks for Mother’s Day gifts:

Medication organizers \$1.50 - \$10. Help Mom or Grandma keep track of her pills. Available in all sizes (daily, weekly) and shapes, these tools will give the whole family peace of mind that the right pill is being taken at the right time.

Pill cutter-\$3. Many pills and tablets need to be halved or quartered. These handy devices offer precise cutting with minimal effort.

Pill punch - \$8. “Many medications come in a multipunch card that those with arthritis have trouble manipulating,” said Clark Chrisman, pharmacist at Gottlieb. “The pill punch easily pushes the individual pill through the sealed packaging.”

ID bracelet – \$7 and up. A simple piece of jewelry alerts medics to important medical information such as allergies to penicillin, congestive heart failure or diabetes.

Item grabber - \$28. A sturdy clawlike hand tool that can be used to retrieve a box of crackers from the top shelf or a slipper that got kicked too far under the couch.

Adjustable cane - \$27. This black cane compresses to a 5-inch-long stick – much like a collapsible umbrella. Small enough to place in a purse or coat pocket, it can be quickly assembled to provide support.

Medicool - \$45. Keep insulin or other medications cool and organized for easy application.

Rollator - \$160. A luxurious walker with high-quality wheels and brakes, with a basket for shopping and a handy bench to stop and rest.

Accessible bathroom aids – \$27-\$100. Handheld water sprayers, toilet seat benches and bathtub safety rails may look insignificant in their box, but install them in the bathroom, and you have created a safe haven that will be used, well, regularly.

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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