BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

Smart Pill Dispensers & Medication Reminders

Phone reminders, pharmacy pill packs and smart dispensers — explained in plain English, one step at a time

A plain-English guide for you and the family who helps

Take your time — you can't break it

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

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For phone reminders, pill packs, Hero, MedMinder & more · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your guide to the tools that help people take the right pills at the right time: free reminders on a phone or smart speaker, pre-sorted pill packs from the pharmacy, and smart dispensers that sound an alarm and can let family know when a dose is missed. Read it in any order and at your own pace. One promise runs through every page: this guide helps with the *technology*. Your doctor and pharmacist decide *what* you take and *when*.

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PART 1

Getting Started

The tools that help with pills, from a simple weekly box to a dispenser that texts the family — and the one conversation to have before you buy anything.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. If you take several pills a day, or you help someone who does, you already know the questions that come up: *Did I take my morning pills? Was that the blue one or the white one? Did Mom remember her evening dose?* This guide is about the tools that help answer those questions.

I'm Bill. I've spent more than 30 years working with technology, and these days I help folks here in Portage County feel at home with theirs. I wrote this guide the way I'd explain it at your kitchen table: patiently, in plain English, and without trying to sell you anything. When a word like "cartridge" or "adherence" comes up, I'll stop and explain it.

What this guide will do for you

- Help you choose the **right level of help**: a free phone reminder, pre-sorted pharmacy pill packs, or a smart dispenser.
- Walk you through setting up medication reminders on an **iPhone**, an **Android** phone and an **Alexa** speaker.
- Explain how pharmacy **pill packs** work and how to ask for them.
- Show how smart dispensers like **Hero** and **MedMinder** work, what they cost, and how family can get an alert when a dose is missed.
- Point out the **scams** that target people who take medicine, and how to avoid them.

My one firm rule

I'm a technology helper, not a doctor or a pharmacist. Everything in this guide is about *how the tools work*. **What** you take, **how much** and **when** is always decided by your prescriber and your pharmacist. If a reminder app, a dispenser or a family member ever seems to disagree with the label on your bottle, the label and your pharmacist win, every time.

STAY SAFE

Never change a medicine because of a gadget

Don't skip, double up, split or move a dose because an app or a dispenser says so. If something doesn't match, stop and call your pharmacy. Pharmacists answer these questions all day, and there's no charge for asking.

You can't break anything by reading

Most of what's here is setting up reminders and choosing a service — things you can do slowly and undo if you change your mind. Take your time. Try one idea, see how it fits your day, and come back for the next one.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this matters

The right reminder takes a daily worry off your mind. For families, a dispenser that sends an alert can replace the nervous "Did you take your pills?" phone call with quiet peace of mind — while the person taking the pills stays in charge of their own day.

If anything here leaves you unsure, call me at **(330) 200-8042**. There's no such thing as a silly question.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

Pillboxes, Reminders & Dispensers: What's What

There are four main kinds of help, and each one builds on the one before. Most people do well with the first or second. Some need more. Here's the whole ladder, from simplest to most involved.

1. The plain weekly pillbox

The familiar plastic box with a lid for each day — sometimes with morning, noon, evening and bedtime rows. You (or a family member) fill it once a week. It costs a few dollars at any drugstore. It doesn't remind you of anything, but it shows at a glance whether today's dose is still sitting there.

2. A reminder on your phone or speaker

A free alarm or medication reminder on your phone, or a spoken reminder from a smart speaker like an Amazon Echo. It tells you *when*. Paired with a pillbox, it covers most people's needs at no extra cost. Part 2 shows you how.

3. Pre-sorted pill packs from the pharmacy

Instead of bottles, the pharmacy sorts your pills into small clear packets or a sealed card, each printed with the **date and time** to take it. Nobody at home has to sort anything. Part 3 explains how to ask for this.

4. A smart pill dispenser

A countertop machine that holds your pills, sounds an alarm at dose time, and gives out only the right pills when you press a button. Many connect to the internet or a cell network and can send family an alert if a dose is missed. These usually come with a monthly fee. Part 4 covers them.

	Pillbox	Phone or speaker reminder	Pharmacy pill packs	Smart dispenser
Reminds you	No	Yes	No (pair with a reminder)	Yes, alarm and light

	Pillbox	Phone or speaker reminder	Pharmacy pill packs	Smart dispenser
Sorts the pills	You do	You do	Pharmacy does	Machine gives out each dose
Tells family	No	Some apps can	No	Yes, on most connected models
Typical cost	A few dollars	Free	Often no extra charge	Monthly fee

TIP

Mix and match

These aren't either-or. A very common setup is pharmacy pill packs plus a phone alarm. Another is a smart dispenser that a family member refills, plus a shared calendar for refill dates.

CHAPTER 3

Choosing the Right Level of Help

The best tool is the simplest one that actually works for the person using it. More technology isn't always better: a dispenser that beeps all day because no one knows how to answer it helps no one. Here are some honest questions to ask.

Questions to ask, one at a time

1. **How many medicines, how many times a day?** One or two pills once a day is often handled with a pillbox and an alarm. Many medicines at several times a day is where pill packs or a dispenser shine.
2. **Is the trouble remembering, or sorting?** If remembering is the problem, a reminder helps. If sorting is the problem, pill packs or a dispenser help.
3. **Does the person carry a phone and hear it?** If not, a speaker or a dispenser with a loud alarm and a light may work better.
4. **Does a family member want to know about missed doses?** That points to a connected dispenser or an app with a caregiver feature.
5. **Is there Wi-Fi in the home?** Some dispensers need Wi-Fi; others use a cell connection and need no internet at all.
6. **What's the budget?** Reminders are free. Smart dispensers usually cost tens of dollars every month.

A quick guide

If this sounds like you	Start here
Remembers well, just wants a nudge	Phone alarm or speaker reminder (Part 2).
Lots of pills, sorting is a chore	Pharmacy pill packs (Part 3), plus a reminder.
Forgets doses, family lives far away	A connected smart dispenser with caregiver alerts (Part 4).
No Wi-Fi at home	A dispenser that uses a cell connection, or pill packs and a plain alarm clock.
Memory is changing noticeably	Talk with the doctor first. A dispenser may help, but a person may also need to check in.

HEADS UP

Be honest about memory

Smart dispensers work best for people who live fairly independently and can tell whether the right pills came out. Hero says as much on its own website. If someone is often confused about what day it is, a machine alone isn't enough; please talk with their doctor about the right level of support.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Choosing the right level up front saves money and frustration — and it keeps the person taking the pills in charge of as much of their own routine as they're comfortable with.

CHAPTER 4

Before You Buy: Talk with the Pharmacist

Before you set up any reminder or buy any dispenser, spend ten minutes with the pharmacist. It costs nothing, and it can save you from setting up a gadget around a schedule that's out of date.

Bring an up-to-date list

Write down (or print from your pharmacy app) every medicine, including vitamins, supplements and over-the-counter pills you take regularly. For each, note the name, the strength and when you take it.

Questions worth asking

- "Is this list still right? Is there anything I should no longer be taking?"
- "Can any of these be taken at the same time, so I have fewer dose times a day?"
- "Which of these must be taken with food, or on an empty stomach?"
- "Can all of these go in a pill pack or a dispenser? Are any too large, or sensitive to air or moisture?"
- "Do you offer pre-sorted packs, or refills that all come due on the same day?"

GOOD TO KNOW

Some pills don't belong in a dispenser

Liquids, inhalers, injections, patches and eye drops can't go in a pill dispenser. Some tablets need to stay in their original packaging, and pills taken "only as needed" usually stay out too. The pharmacist will know which of yours are which.

Ask about a free medication review

If you have a Medicare drug plan and take several medicines, you may qualify for a free, one-on-one review with a pharmacist through your plan. Chapter 22 explains how to ask.

STAY SAFE

Write the schedule down before you program anything

Every reminder and dispenser in this guide is only as good as the schedule typed into it. Get the schedule from the pharmacist or the labels, write it on paper, and set up the gadget from that paper — not from memory.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Starting from a checked, simplified list means fewer dose times, fewer alarms, and much less chance of a mistake being built into the machine.

PART 2

Free Reminders on Your Phone & Speaker

The reminders you already own: the iPhone Health app, Android alarms, reminder apps and Alexa. No monthly fee, and a good fit for most people.

CHAPTER 5

iPhone: Medication Reminders in the Health App

Every iPhone comes with the **Health** app — the white icon with a red heart. Inside it is a **Medications** section that keeps your list, reminds you at dose time, and lets you mark each dose as taken. It's free, and it's private to you unless you choose to share it.

Add your first medication

1. Open the **Health** app.
2. Tap **Browse** at the bottom right, then tap **Medications**. (You can also tap the search field and type **Medications**.)
3. Tap **Add a Medication**. If you already have some on your list, the button says **Add Medication**.
4. Type the name of the medicine in the search field and pick it from the list. On many iPhones you can instead tap the **camera** button and point it at the label on the bottle.
5. Follow the screens to choose the **type** (for example, tablet or capsule) and the **strength** printed on the label.
6. Set the **schedule**: how often and what time. Tap **Add a Time** for each dose time on the label.
7. If you like, choose a **shape** and **colors** so the picture on your screen matches the pill in your hand.
8. Add an optional nickname, such as "Blood pressure — morning," and tap **Done**.

TIP

Copy the label, word for word

Type the strength and times exactly as they're printed on the pharmacy label. If the label says "twice daily," ask the pharmacist which two times work best, then use those.

GOOD TO KNOW

The interaction question

The first time you add a medication, the Health app may ask whether you'd like to check for interactions with alcohol, cannabis or tobacco. It's optional. Anything it flags is worth a question to your pharmacist, not a reason to stop a medicine on your own.

When the reminder arrives

1. At dose time, a notification appears on the iPhone screen (and on an Apple Watch, if you wear one).
2. Tap the notification.
3. Tap **Taken** or **Skipped** for each medicine, or tap **Log All as Taken** to mark the whole dose at once.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

No more wondering "Did I already take it?" Open Health, tap Medications, and today's log shows exactly what you marked and when.

CHAPTER 6

iPhone: Follow-Ups, Logging & Sharing the List

Once your medications are in the Health app, a few extra settings make the reminders harder to miss and let a trusted family member see your list.

Follow-up reminders

If you don't log a scheduled dose, the Health app can send a **follow-up reminder** about 30 minutes after the first one. It's a gentle second knock on the door.

1. Open **Health**, tap **Browse**, then **Medications**.
2. Scroll down to the settings section (labeled **Options** on many iPhones).
3. Turn on **Follow Up Reminders**.

Apple says the follow-up arrives about 30 minutes after the first reminder if the dose hasn't been logged.

Critical Alerts, for the doses that really matter

With Follow Up Reminders on, you can also turn on **Critical Alerts** for a medication. A Critical Alert appears on the Lock Screen and plays a sound even when the iPhone is muted or a Focus (such as Sleep or Do Not Disturb) is on.

HEADS UP

Use Critical Alerts sparingly

A Critical Alert sounds even at times you've asked the phone to be quiet. Save it for a medicine your doctor has said must not be missed. To turn them off later, go to **Settings** > **Apps** > **Health** > **Notifications**.

Logging a dose you forgot to log

If you took your pills but didn't tap the reminder, open **Health** > **Browse** > **Medications**, find today's dose time, and tap **Taken**. For a medicine you take only as needed, tap **Log** next to it whenever you take one.

Sharing your list with family

If a son, daughter or caregiver also has an iPhone, you can share your Health information with them — and you can choose to include your medications. They'll see your list on their own phone. You choose what's shared, and you can stop sharing at any time.

1. Open **Health** and tap **Sharing**.
2. Tap **Share with Someone** (or **Ask Someone to Share** if you're the one asking).
3. Pick the person from your contacts and follow the steps to choose what to share. Include **Medications** if you want them to see your list.

GOOD TO KNOW

Sharing isn't the same as a missed-dose alert

Health Sharing lets family see your information. Don't count on it to wake them up when a dose is missed. If family needs a prompt alert, look at the caregiver features in Chapter 8 or a connected dispenser in Part 4.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A daughter who lives two states away can glance at her own phone before a doctor's appointment and know exactly which medicines are on the list — without a long phone call to read bottles aloud.

CHAPTER 7

Android: Alarms & Samsung Health

Android phones don't all come with the same built-in medication tracker, because different companies make them. But every Android phone has a **Clock** app with alarms, and a labeled alarm that repeats every day is one of the most reliable reminders there is.

A repeating, labeled alarm in the Clock app

1. Open the **Clock** app and tap **Alarm** at the bottom.
2. Tap the **+** (Add) button and set the time of the dose. Tap **OK**.
3. Tap the small **down arrow** on the new alarm to open its settings.
4. Tap **Add label** and type something clear, such as "Evening pills — Tuesday row."
5. Tap the days of the week you want it to repeat. For a daily medicine, choose every day.
6. Repeat for each dose time of the day.

TIP

Leave a few minutes between alarms

Google notes that setting two alarms very close together can cause the first to be canceled. If you have two medicines at nearly the same time, use one alarm with a label that names both.

GOOD TO KNOW

Samsung phones look a little different

On a Samsung Galaxy, the Clock app works the same way, though buttons may be in slightly different places. Look for the **+** to add an alarm and a **Repeat** or day-of-the-week row to make it daily.

Samsung Health's Medications section

If you have a Samsung Galaxy phone, the **Samsung Health** app has a **Medications** feature in the US. You can add each medicine, set reminder times and refill reminders, and log each dose. It needs a fairly recent version of the app and of Android, and where it lives in the app can vary by phone and update — look for **Medications** on the main screen or in the list of extra items you can add.

HEADS UP

Check that notifications are allowed

If medication reminders stop appearing after a phone update, open the phone's **Settings** > **Notifications**, find the app, and make sure its notifications are turned on.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A labeled alarm doesn't need an account, the internet, or any setup beyond the Clock app. It works on any Android phone, and it keeps working even if the Wi-Fi is down.

CHAPTER 8

Reminder Apps with a Caregiver Feature

There are many free medication reminder apps for both iPhone and Android. Their main extra trick is a **caregiver** (or "friend") feature: if you don't mark a dose as taken, a family member you've invited can get an alert on their phone.

Medisafe, as one example

Medisafe is one of the longest-running reminder apps. Its core reminders are free. It lets you invite a family member as a **Medfriend**, who can be alerted if you miss a dose. Some extras — such as more detailed reports — are part of a paid premium version.

How to install one safely

1. Open the **App Store** (iPhone) or **Google Play Store** (Android). Don't download an app from a link in a text or an ad.
2. Search for the app by name. Check that the developer's name matches the company you expect.
3. Tap **Get** or **Install**.
4. Open the app and create an account if it asks. Write the email and password on your password list.
5. Add your medicines from your pharmacist-checked list (Chapter 4).
6. If you want a family member to be alerted, find the caregiver or friend option and send them an invitation by text or email.

HEADS UP

Read what a free app does with your information

Some free health apps make money from advertising or by sharing information with partners. Before you type in your full medication list, read the app's privacy section in the App Store or Google Play listing. Apps that come with your phone, like Apple Health, keep the information on your device and your account.

TIP

Your pharmacy's app may already remind you

Many pharmacy apps offer refill reminders, and some offer dose reminders too. If you already use one, check its settings before adding another app. Bill's Pharmacy Apps & Refills guide covers CVS, Walgreens and others step by step.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A caregiver feature gives family a gentle heads-up without a smart dispenser or a monthly fee — a good middle step for someone who carries their phone and uses it every day.

CHAPTER 9

Alexa & Smart Speaker Reminders

If there's an Amazon Echo in the kitchen, it can speak a reminder out loud at dose time. For someone who doesn't keep a phone in their pocket, a voice in the room can be easier to notice than a buzz.

Set a daily reminder by voice

1. Stand near the Echo and say clearly: **"Alexa, remind me to take my morning pills every day at 8 a.m."**
2. Alexa repeats the reminder back. If something's wrong, say **"Alexa, cancel that reminder"** and try again.
3. Add one reminder for each dose time: **"Alexa, remind me to take my evening pills every day at 6 p.m."**
4. To hear what's set, say **"Alexa, what are my reminders?"**

When a reminder is due, Alexa announces it out loud and also sends a notification to the phone with the Alexa app. You can review, edit or delete reminders in the Alexa app on the phone.

TIP

Name the pills in the reminder

"Remind me to take my pills" is fine. "Remind me to take the blue blood-pressure pill with breakfast" is better, because the reminder itself tells you what to do.

GOOD TO KNOW

A reminder isn't proof

Alexa can remind, but it can't tell whether the pills were actually taken. Pair it with a pillbox so the empty compartment tells the rest of the story.

HEADS UP

Speakers and privacy

Your reminders are stored with your Amazon account. If visitors use the Echo too, anyone nearby will hear the reminder. Keep the wording as private as you like, such as "morning pills."

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A spoken reminder reaches someone wherever they are in the room — no phone to find, no glasses needed.

PART 3

Pill Packs from the Pharmacy

Let the pharmacy do the sorting. Pre-sorted packets printed with the date and time take the weekly pillbox chore off the kitchen table.

CHAPTER 10

How Pre-Sorted Pill Packs Work

Pharmacists call this **adherence packaging** or **multi-dose packaging**. "Adherence" is just a medical word for taking your medicine the way it was prescribed. Instead of a row of bottles, you get your pills already sorted by dose time.

What you receive

- **Pouches on a roll**: a strip of small clear packets, each printed with the date, the time, and the name of every pill inside. You tear off the next packet at dose time.
- **Blister cards** (sometimes called bubble packs): a sealed card with a bubble for each dose, arranged like a calendar. You push the pills through the foil.

Why people like them

- Nobody has to fill a weekly pillbox, so there are fewer sorting mistakes.
- Each packet says exactly when to take it, so it's easy to see if a dose was missed.
- Refills are usually lined up so everything arrives together, often once a month.
- Family members can check progress at a glance during a visit or a video call.

TIP

Pair packs with a reminder

Pill packs sort, but they don't beep. Set a phone alarm or an Alexa reminder (Part 2) for each dose time printed on the packets.

HEADS UP

When the doctor changes a medicine

If a prescription changes in the middle of the month, the packets already at home may be out of date. Call the pharmacy right away and ask exactly what to do with the packets you have. Don't try to re-sort them yourself.

GOOD TO KNOW

Not everything fits in a packet

Liquids, inhalers, eye drops, refrigerated medicines and some tablets that must stay in their original packaging will still come separately. The pharmacist decides what can be packed.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

For someone taking many pills a day, pre-sorted packs can turn a twenty-minute weekly sorting job — and the worry that goes with it — into simply opening the next packet.

CHAPTER 11

Amazon Pharmacy PillPack

PillPack is Amazon Pharmacy's pre-sorted packet service. Packets are labeled with the date and time to take them and are delivered to your home each month.

Who it's for

Amazon describes PillPack as a service for people who take several recurring medicines. It says the packet service itself comes at no extra cost — you pay for your medicines as you would at any pharmacy, through your insurance. Since June 2025, people with **Medicare Part D** drug plans can use their coverage for PillPack, depending on their plan and their state's rules.

Getting started

1. Have your pharmacist-checked medication list (Chapter 4) and your insurance or Medicare drug plan card ready.
2. On a computer or phone, go to **pharmacy.amazon.com** and sign in with your Amazon account.
3. Look for the **PillPack** option and follow the steps. Amazon will ask for your prescriptions, your doctors' names and your insurance.
4. Amazon's pharmacy contacts your doctors or your current pharmacy to transfer the prescriptions.
5. Before the first shipment, confirm the schedule they show you matches your labels. Call them if anything looks different.

HEADS UP

Check your plan's network first

Before switching, call the number on your drug plan card and ask whether Amazon Pharmacy is in your plan's network and what your copays would be. Prices and coverage differ from plan to plan.

Letting a family member help: caregiver access

Amazon Pharmacy lets an adult invite a trusted person to help manage their prescriptions from that person's own Amazon account. No password sharing is needed.

1. The person whose prescriptions they are signs in to Amazon Pharmacy and opens their account settings.
2. They choose **Manage health access**, then **Invite someone to help**.
3. They enter the helper's name and mobile number and send the invitation.
4. The helper, who must have signed up for Amazon Pharmacy themselves, accepts the invitation.

Once set up, the helper can see prescriptions, orders and delivery details. Amazon says an adult can add up to six helpers, and either person can remove access at any time from **Manage health access**.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A son or daughter can track deliveries and refills from their own phone, while Mom or Dad keeps their own account — and nobody has to share a password.

CHAPTER 12

Asking Your Local Pharmacy

You don't have to switch to mail order to get help with sorting. Many local pharmacies — especially independent, family-owned ones — offer adherence packaging and other services that make a monthly routine simpler. The only way to know is to ask.

What to ask for

- **Adherence or multi-dose packaging**: "Do you sort my pills into packets or blister cards by dose time?" Ask whether there's a charge.
- **Medication synchronization** ("med sync"): "Can you line up my refills so they're all ready on the same day each month?" One trip, one pickup.
- **Delivery**: "Do you deliver, and is there a fee?"
- **Refill reminders by text**: "Can you text me when a refill is ready?"

GOOD TO KNOW

Programs change — so ask by name

Large chains have started, renamed and ended packaging programs over the years. Rather than relying on an old ad or website, ask the pharmacist at your counter exactly what they offer today and what it costs.

Using a pharmacy app alongside packs

Pharmacy apps can show what's due, send a text when a refill is ready, and let a family member help. Bill's Pharmacy Apps & Refills guide covers the CVS, Walgreens, Walmart and Giant Eagle apps and automatic refill programs in detail.

TIP

A one-page list on the fridge

Ask the pharmacy for a printed list of everything you take. Keep it on the refrigerator or in the Health app, and bring it to every doctor's visit. Emergency crews often look on the fridge.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A friendly local pharmacist who knows your name and your medicines is one of the best tools in this whole guide — and many of these services cost little or nothing.

PART 4

Smart Pill Dispensers

Countertop machines that sound an alarm, give out the right pills, and can let family know when a dose is missed. What they do, what they cost, and how to set one up.

CHAPTER 13

What a Smart Dispenser Does — and Doesn't

A **smart pill dispenser** is a locked or covered container that holds your pills and releases only the right ones at the right time. At dose time it beeps, lights up, or both. You press a button or tip the unit, and that dose comes out.

Three kinds you'll see

Type	How it works
Connected, you fill it	You (or family) pour each medicine into its own slot or cartridge. The machine counts out each dose. Connects to Wi-Fi and sends alerts to a phone app. Hero works this way.
Connected, pharmacy fills it	The pharmacy delivers pre-filled trays you slide in. Uses a cellular connection, so no home internet is needed. MedMinder works this way.
Not connected (carousel)	A round, often lockable tray with a compartment for each dose. You fill it, it beeps at dose time. No app, no monthly fee, no alerts to family.

What they're good at

- Loud, hard-to-miss reminders with a light as well as sound.
- Giving out only the scheduled dose, which helps avoid accidental double doses.
- On connected models: telling family when a dose is late or missed, and when supplies run low.

What they can't do

- They can't make sure the pills are actually *swallowed*. A dose taken out of the machine is counted as "taken."
- They can't hold liquids, inhalers, injections or patches.
- They can't decide what to do about a missed dose. That's a question for the pharmacist.
- They're only as accurate as the schedule typed in and the pills loaded.

STAY SAFE

Double-check every setup

Whenever a dispenser is filled or its schedule is changed, have a second person compare it with the pharmacy labels. A pharmacist can also look over the schedule if you bring a printout or show them the app.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

For the right person, a dispenser turns "Did I take it?" into a beep, a button and a green light — and lets a faraway family member stop worrying every evening.

CHAPTER 14

Hero: What It Is & What It Costs

Hero is one of the best-known smart dispensers for people who live at home. It's a countertop machine, a bit larger than a coffee maker, paired with the free Hero app for the person taking the pills and for family caregivers.

How Hero works

- It holds up to **10 different medicines**, each in its own cartridge, and Hero says it can hold more than a month's supply at a time.
- At dose time it **beeps and lights up**. One press of the button sorts and dispenses that dose into a cup.
- If a dose is missed, Hero lets you dispense it later — its instruction manual says up to **four hours** after the scheduled time.
- Caregivers can get notified in the app if a dose is late or missed, and when pills are running low.
- It needs a home **Wi-Fi** connection to send alerts.

What it costs (as of November 2026)

Hero is a subscription: you don't buy the machine outright, you pay monthly and the dispenser, the app and support are included. Hero's pricing page listed these plans in November 2026:

Plan	Price
12 months prepaid	$29.99 a month, paid up front for the year
Monthly, 12-month commitment	$44.99 a month
No commitment	$59.99 a month

Hero also advertises a 30-day money-back guarantee. Read the trial terms carefully: Hero says the 30 days begin when you activate the dispenser or a week after it's delivered, whichever comes first.

HEADS UP

Prices differ from page to page

Hero runs promotions, and different Hero pages have shown different prices. Before you order, look at the final total and the commitment length on the checkout screen, and write them down. Ask how to cancel and whether the machine must be returned.

GOOD TO KNOW

Hero's own advice on who it suits

Hero says it works best for people living independently who can confirm that the pills dispensed look right. That matches the advice in Chapter 3: a machine supports a routine, it doesn't replace a person.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

One button instead of ten bottles, and an app that tells the family "all doses taken today" — that's the promise. It's worth a month's trial for someone with a complicated schedule.

CHAPTER 15

Setting Up Hero

Most families set Hero up together: one person with the phone app, one at the dispenser. Set aside an hour, have the pharmacist-checked medication list on the table, and have the pill bottles ready.

Before you start

- **Wi-Fi name and password** for the home.
- A smartphone with the **Hero** app installed from the App Store or Google Play.
- A spot on the counter within about **75 feet** of the Wi-Fi router, with no more than two walls in between, near an outlet.

Hero needs the 2.4 GHz part of your Wi-Fi

Most home routers broadcast two kinds of Wi-Fi: **2.4 GHz** (reaches farther) and **5 GHz** (faster, shorter range). Hero needs **2.4 GHz**. Many newer and mesh routers combine both under one name, which can stop Hero from connecting. Hero's help center suggests separating them into two names, for example **Home_2.4GHz** and **Home_5GHz**, and connecting Hero to the 2.4 GHz one. If you can't change the router yourself, your internet provider or router maker can help.

The setup, step by step

1. Plug in the dispenser and wait for it to start.
2. Open the **Hero** app on the phone and create an account. The person setting up becomes the account's caregiver admin.
3. Follow the app's steps to connect the dispenser to the home's **2.4 GHz** Wi-Fi.
4. Add each medicine and its schedule from your written list — the app walks you through it.
5. When the app tells you to, fill each **cartridge** with one medicine and insert it in the slot the app shows.
6. Do a test: when the first dose time comes, press the button and compare what comes out with the labels.

TIP

A phone is only needed for setup

Hero's help center says that after setup, the person taking the pills doesn't need a phone at all — the dispenser's button does the work. The app can live on a family member's phone.

If the Wi-Fi password changes

New router, or a new password from the internet company? Hero won't send alerts until it's reconnected. Hero's help center says to go to **Device Settings** > **Wi-Fi Network** > **Reset Wi-Fi**, then follow the steps to choose the network again.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

An hour of careful setup, done together, means months of doses counted out correctly — and a family that knows exactly how the machine was programmed.

CHAPTER 16

Hero for Caregivers: Alerts, Passcodes & the App

Hero's app is where family members see what's happening. It shows whether each dose was dispensed on time, late, or missed.

Alerts family can receive

- A **late or missed dose** notification.
- A **low supply** alert, so refills can be ordered in time.
- Hero says its alerts can arrive as app notifications, text messages or emails.

Extra safety settings

Caregivers can turn on extra protections in the app:

- **Passcode protection**: the person must type a passcode before certain medicines are dispensed. Hero's help center says that when a dose includes a passcode-protected medicine, pressing the button asks for the code first.
- **Maximum dispense limits**, which help prevent too many doses of a medicine being taken.
- **Low-pill alerts**.

Inviting your loved one to the app

If the person taking the pills has a smartphone and would like their own notifications, the caregiver admin can invite them. Hero's help center says to open the app's **More** menu, then **Settings & Notifications** > **App Notifications**, and send the invitation.

HEADS UP

Respect, not surveillance

Talk with your parent before turning on alerts. Agree together who gets notified, and what will happen when a dose is missed — a friendly call, not a scolding. People keep using tools they feel respected by.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Instead of calling every evening to ask, you get a quiet alert only when something's actually off — and your calls can be about the grandkids instead.

CHAPTER 17

MedMinder & Pharmacy-Filled Dispensers

MedMinder takes a different approach. Its dispenser looks much like a seven-day pillbox, but it has a built-in **cellular** connection — the same kind of signal a cell phone uses — so it doesn't need home internet.

How MedMinder works

- Medicines can come from MedMinder's pharmacy already organized in trays, so nobody at home sorts or counts. The tray simply slides into the dispenser.
- At dose time the dispenser reminds the person, and MedMinder can follow up with a phone call, text or email if the dose isn't taken.
- Family and caregivers can see reports showing when compartments were opened, when it was refilled, and whether any doses were missed.
- Schedules can be set up online or by calling MedMinder, which can make changes for you.
- It needs an electrical outlet and cell coverage, and has a backup battery for power outages.

What it costs

MedMinder's prices depend on the model and whether you use its pharmacy service, and published figures vary widely. Call MedMinder for a written quote, and ask what's included: the device, the cellular service, the pharmacy packing, and the monitoring.

TIP

Good for homes without Wi-Fi

Because it uses a cellular connection, a MedMinder-style dispenser is worth a look for a parent who doesn't have home internet, or whose Wi-Fi is unreliable.

GOOD TO KNOW

Other names you may see

You'll find other dispensers in reviews and stores, such as Livi. Models, prices and services change often. Whatever you consider, ask the same questions: Who fills it? Does it need Wi-Fi or cell service? Who gets alerts? What does it cost each month, and how do I cancel?

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

No sorting at home, no Wi-Fi to manage, and a pharmacy team that packs the pills — for some families that's the simplest connected setup there is.

CHAPTER 18

Simple Carousel Dispensers (No Wi-Fi)

If you want a loud reminder and a dispenser that gives out only one dose at a time — but don't want an app or a monthly fee — a simple **carousel** dispenser may fit. It's a round tray, often with around 28 compartments, under a cover with one opening. At dose time it turns to the next compartment and sounds an alarm.

Setting one up, generally

1. Put in fresh batteries (or plug it in) and set the **clock** to the correct time.
2. Set each **alarm time** from your written schedule. The instructions in the box show which buttons to press; they differ by brand.
3. Fill the compartments in order, starting with the next dose, with a second person checking.
4. Close and lock the lid if it has a lock, and keep the key somewhere the person taking the pills won't need it.
5. Watch the first couple of doses together to make sure it turns and beeps as expected.

HEADS UP

Remember daylight saving time

Unlike a phone, most plain dispensers won't change their own clock in March and November. Put a note on the calendar to reset it.

TIP

Batteries matter

A dispenser with dying batteries may stop beeping without warning. Change them on a schedule — for example, when you change the smoke-alarm batteries.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A one-time purchase with no subscription and no internet — a good fit for someone who mainly needs a loud alarm and protection against taking a dose twice.

PART 5

Caregiving, Near & Far

Setting things up for a parent with their blessing, having a plan for missed doses, and keeping the routine going through travel, power outages and refills.

CHAPTER 19

Setting Up Reminders for a Parent

Helping a parent with medicines is an act of love, and it goes best when it feels like teamwork. The technology is the easy part; the conversation comes first.

Start with a conversation

- Ask what's hard: remembering, opening bottles, reading labels, or keeping track of refills?
- Offer choices rather than a decision: "Would a phone alarm help, or would you rather try the pill packs?"
- Agree who will see what. If you want missed-dose alerts, say so plainly and ask if that's all right.
- Agree on what happens after a missed dose (Chapter 20) before it ever happens.

A sensible order to set things up

1. Visit the pharmacist together with every bottle, and get a checked, simplified schedule (Chapter 4).
2. Ask about pill packs and lined-up refills (Part 3).
3. Add a reminder your parent will actually notice — phone, speaker or dispenser (Parts 2 and 4).
4. Put refill dates and doctor visits on a shared family calendar.
5. Try it for two weeks, then talk about what's working and adjust.

TIP

Label everything in big letters

A strip of masking tape and a thick marker go a long way: "MORNING" and "EVENING" on pillbox rows, "PRESS FOR PILLS" next to a dispenser button. Big, plain labels help everyone.

GOOD TO KNOW

Their account, their phone

Wherever you can, set up reminders on your parent's own phone and accounts, and use the sharing and caregiver features in this guide to stay informed. That keeps them in charge and avoids sharing passwords.

HEADS UP

Legal paperwork is a separate matter

Seeing a parent's medication list in an app is not the same as having legal authority over their health care. Questions about health care powers of attorney belong with an attorney and the doctor's office.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Set up together, a reminder system becomes something your parent owns and trusts — not something done to them.

CHAPTER 20

When a Dose Is Missed: Make a Plan Ahead

Sooner or later a reminder will be missed. The worst time to figure out what to do is in the moment, worried, at 9 p.m. The best time is now, with the pharmacist's help.

Ask the pharmacist for a missed-dose plan

For each medicine, ask: "If a dose is missed, what should we do?" The answer can be different for each medicine — some can be taken late, some should simply be skipped, and some need a call to the doctor. Write the answers on your medication list.

STAY SAFE

Never double up to catch up

Don't take two doses at once to make up for a missed one unless your pharmacist or doctor has told you to for that specific medicine. When in doubt, call the pharmacy. If someone may have taken too much of a medicine, call **Poison Help at 1-800-222-1222**, or **911** if they're very unwell.

A family plan for missed-dose alerts

1. Decide who receives alerts first, and who is the backup.
2. When an alert arrives, the first step is a **friendly phone call**: "Hi Mom, just checking in."
3. If there's no answer, agree on who calls next: a neighbor, a nearby relative, or another family member.
4. Follow the pharmacist's written missed-dose plan for that medicine.
5. If no one can be reached and you're worried about their safety, call 911 or the local police non-emergency line for a wellness check.

TIP

Write the plan down

Put the plan in the cheat-sheet at the end of this guide, and give a copy to each person on the list.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A plan turns a scary moment into a short checklist — and it keeps one missed dose from becoming two doses taken by mistake.

CHAPTER 21

Travel, Power Outages & Refills

Reminders and dispensers work best on an ordinary day at home. Here's how to keep things on track when the day isn't ordinary.

Traveling

- **Phone reminders** travel with you. When you cross time zones, phone alarms ring at local time — ask your pharmacist how to handle dose times on the trip.
- **Smart dispensers** generally stay home. Before a trip, ask the dispenser company how to pause or adjust the schedule, and fill a travel pillbox with a second person checking.
- **Pill packs** are easy to travel with: just bring the packets for the days you'll be away.
- Carry medicines in your carry-on bag, never in checked luggage, with a copy of your medication list.

Power outages

- A Wi-Fi dispenser can't send alerts while the router is off. Family may get no alert even though nothing is wrong — or something is.
- Some dispensers have a backup battery. MedMinder says its battery lasts about 12 hours. Check what yours has.
- Phone reminders keep working as long as the phone is charged. Keep a charged power bank handy.
- During a long outage, take doses from the pill packs, pillbox or bottles as labeled.

Refills

- Turn on low-supply alerts in your dispenser app, and refill reminders in your pharmacy app.
- Ask the pharmacy about lining up refills on one day each month (Chapter 12).
- Put the refill date on a shared calendar so the whole family can see it.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A little planning for the unusual days keeps a good routine from falling apart the first time something changes.

PART 6

Paying, Staying Safe & Fixing Problems

What Medicare does and doesn't pay for, the scams that follow people who take medicine, and quick fixes when a reminder or dispenser misbehaves.

CHAPTER 22

Who Pays: Medicare, Plans & Free Reviews

This is the question everyone asks, so here's the honest answer: phone reminders are free, pharmacy packaging is often free or low-cost, and smart dispensers are usually paid out of pocket.

Original Medicare

Original Medicare (Parts A and B) generally does not pay for automatic pill dispensers or reminder services. They're usually not treated as medical equipment.

Medicare Advantage plans

Some Medicare Advantage plans include extra benefits — such as an allowance for over-the-counter items — that may cover a medication dispenser. It varies from plan to plan and year to year. Some dispenser companies, Hero among them, advertise reduced pricing through certain plans.

1. Find the member services number on the back of the plan card.
2. Ask: "Does my plan cover an automatic medication dispenser? Which brands, and do I need a prescription?"
3. Ask them to send the answer in writing, or note the date and the name of the person you spoke with.

Medicare Part D and pill packs

Pharmacy packaging usually isn't billed as a separate item; you pay your normal copays. Amazon, for example, says its PillPack packaging comes at no extra cost and accepts Medicare Part D plans (Chapter 11). Ask any pharmacy whether there's a fee before you sign up.

A free medication review through your drug plan

Medicare drug plans must offer a **Medication Therapy Management** (MTM) program. People who qualify can get a free **Comprehensive Medication Review**: a one-on-one conversation, often by phone, with a pharmacist who looks at everything you take and gives you a written summary. Each plan sets its own rules for who qualifies, usually based on how many chronic conditions and medicines you have and your yearly drug costs.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A free review can mean fewer pills and fewer dose times — which makes every reminder and dispenser in this guide simpler to use.

TIP

Read the fine print on subscriptions

For any dispenser with a monthly fee, ask: Is there a setup fee? How long is the commitment? What happens if I cancel early? Must I return the device, and who pays the shipping? Write the answers down.

CHAPTER 23

Scams: Fake Pharmacies & "Free Device" Calls

Anyone who takes medicine — and especially anyone on Medicare — is a target for a few well-worn scams. Knowing them ahead of time is most of the battle.

The "free medical device" call

The phone rings. The caller says they're with Medicare, or "working with" Medicare, and you qualify for a free brace, a free medical device, or a free pill dispenser. All they need is your Medicare number. The FTC warns this is a scam: Medicare doesn't call to offer free equipment, and the caller is after your Medicare number to bill for things you never get, or to steal your identity.

SCAM ALERT

Hang up on "free" Medicare offers

Never give your Medicare number, Social Security number or bank details to someone who called you. Caller ID can be faked to show "Medicare." If you're unsure, hang up and call **1-800-MEDICARE** (1-800-633-4227) yourself.

Fake online pharmacies

The FDA's **BeSafeRx** campaign warns about websites that pretend to be pharmacies. Their pills may be fake, contaminated, the wrong strength, or never arrive — and they often steal card numbers too.

Warning signs

- It sells prescription medicine **without a prescription** from your doctor. Real pharmacies always require one.
- Prices are far lower than anywhere else.
- It has no U.S. street address or phone number, or no licensed pharmacist to talk to.
- It arrives by spam email, text or pop-up ad.

SCAM ALERT

"Your prescription is on hold — pay now"

A text or email says a prescription or delivery is held and asks you to click a link to pay. Don't click. Open your pharmacy's own app, or call the number on your prescription label, to check.

Dispenser and app look-alikes

- Download apps only from the App Store or Google Play, never from a link in a text.
- Order dispensers from the company's own website or a store you know — type the address yourself.
- A real company will never ask for payment by gift card, wire transfer or cryptocurrency.

SCAM ALERT

"Tech support" for your dispenser

If someone calls saying your pill dispenser or health app needs "fixing" and asks to connect to your computer or phone, hang up. Call the company back using the number in their app or on their own website.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Knowing these few tricks protects your Medicare number, your bank account and — most importantly — the pills you put in your body.

CHAPTER 24

Fixing Common Problems

Most reminder and dispenser trouble comes down to a handful of causes. Try these in order, and remember: you can't break anything by checking a setting.

"My phone stopped reminding me"

1. Check that the phone isn't on silent or in a Focus or Do Not Disturb mode at dose times.
2. Open the phone's **Settings** > **Notifications** and make sure the reminder app (Health, Clock, Samsung Health or your reminder app) is allowed to send notifications.
3. Open the app and check that the medicine still has a schedule. In Apple Health, a medicine marked "as needed" won't send reminders.
4. Restart the phone.

"I deleted a reminder by mistake"

No harm done. Add it again from your written schedule (Chapter 5, 7 or 9). This is exactly why the written list matters.

"Alexa didn't remind me"

- Ask "Alexa, what are my reminders?" to check it's still set.
- Make sure the Echo is plugged in, the volume is up, and the light ring isn't red (red means the microphone is off).
- Check the reminder was set as repeating — "every day" — and not just once.

"The dispenser went offline" or "family stopped getting alerts"

1. Check that the dispenser is plugged in and the home internet is working.
2. If the Wi-Fi name or password changed, reconnect the dispenser (Chapter 15 for Hero).
3. Make sure it's within range of the router.
4. Check the caregiver's phone still allows notifications from the dispenser's app.
5. Call the dispenser company's support line — the number is in the app or on their own website.

"The wrong pills came out" or "I'm not sure it's right"

STAY SAFE

Stop and check before taking anything

Don't take a dose that looks wrong. Set it aside, compare it with the labels, and call your pharmacy. Then call the dispenser company so they can check the setup.

"I forgot my pills this morning"

Follow the missed-dose plan from your pharmacist (Chapter 20). If you don't have one yet, call the pharmacy and ask — and write the answer down for next time.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Most problems are solved in five minutes with a setting or a restart — and the few that aren't get a quick, safe answer from the pharmacist or the company.

PART 7

When to Call Bill & Your Cheat-Sheet

An honest word about when a hand is worth it, and a one-page summary to keep by the pills.

CHAPTER 25

When to Call Bill

I've written this guide so you can handle most of this on your own. But part of being helpful is being honest about when a hand saves time and worry. Here's my straight advice, with no pressure.

Times it's well worth a call

- **Setting up a smart dispenser**, especially getting it onto the 2.4 GHz Wi-Fi and making sure family alerts actually arrive.
- **Splitting your Wi-Fi** into separate 2.4 GHz and 5 GHz names when a dispenser won't connect.
- **Putting reminders on a parent's phone** — Health app, alarms or Alexa — tuned to how they really use it.
- **Connecting family**: Health Sharing, caregiver invitations, shared calendars for refills and appointments.
- **After a scare**: a suspicious call about Medicare, or a pharmacy website you're not sure about.
- **You'd simply rather have a patient person handle it.** That's always a good enough reason.

GOOD TO KNOW

What I don't do

I set up and explain the technology. I don't fill pill cartridges, choose doses or change schedules — that's for you, your family and your pharmacist. I'm glad to sit alongside while you do it, so the gadget is set up exactly the way the pharmacist said.

What working with me is like

I work at your pace — no rushing, no talking down, no jargon. I explain what I'm doing in plain words, and I ask before I touch anything personal. I'll always tell you honestly when something isn't worth the money. Home visits are here in Portage County, Ohio; remote help reaches you and your family wherever you live. I've been doing this work for more than 30 years.

FROM BILL

How to reach me

Call **(330) 200-8042**, or book a time at **billshometech.com/book**. My help is **$49 remote · $99 in your home**. This guide is free to read and share. If you're calling about a parent, tell me, and we'll make sure you're included on the call.

GOOD TO KNOW

You may be greeted by Sophie

When you call or visit billshometech.com, you might first meet **Sophie**, my AI receptionist. She can answer quick questions and help you book a time. The actual help always comes from me.

Thank you for taking care of yourself, or of someone you love. A good routine and the right tool make a real difference, one dose at a time.

— Bill

CHAPTER 26

Your Medication Reminder Cheat-Sheet

Keep a copy of this page by the pills, and give one to the family member who helps. The whole guide, boiled down.

The essentials

What	How
iPhone reminders	**Health** > Browse > **Medications** > Add a Medication. Turn on **Follow Up Reminders** for a second nudge after about 30 minutes.
Android reminders	**Clock** > Alarm > **+** > set time > Add label > pick the days.
Alexa	"Alexa, remind me to take my morning pills every day at 8 a.m."
Pill packs	Ask your pharmacy for adherence packaging and lined-up refills.
Hero	Needs 2.4 GHz Wi-Fi. Caregivers get late, missed and low-supply alerts in the app.
MedMinder	Uses a cell connection, no Wi-Fi needed. Pharmacy-filled trays available.
Medicare scam	Medicare never calls to offer free devices. Hang up; call 1-800-MEDICARE yourself.

Write it down once

Keep handy	
Pharmacy name & phone	_____
Pharmacist I talk to	_____
Dose times (morning / noon / evening / bed)	_____
Reminder type (phone, Alexa, dispenser)	_____
Dispenser company & support number	_____
Who gets missed-dose alerts (1st, 2nd)	_____
Refill day each month	_____
Medicare / drug plan member services	_____

When something's wrong, in order

1. A dose looks wrong: **don't take it**. Compare with the labels and call the pharmacy.
2. A dose was missed: follow the pharmacist's **missed-dose plan** (Chapter 20). Never double up unless told to.
3. Someone may have taken too much: call **Poison Help, 1-800-222-1222**, or **911** if they're very unwell.
4. Reminders stopped: check silent mode, notifications and the schedule, then restart (Chapter 24).
5. Dispenser offline: check power and Wi-Fi, reconnect, then call the company.
6. Still stuck with the technology: call Bill at **(330) 200-8042**.

The golden rules

- Your **pharmacist and prescriber** decide what and when. Gadgets only remind.
- Set up every reminder from a **written, checked** schedule — and update it when anything changes.
- Have a **second person** check whenever a dispenser is filled.
- Never give your Medicare number to someone who called you.