

caring
for those
you care about

Nursing Homes: Asking the Right Questions

Sometimes the need for a nursing home comes suddenly or unexpectedly. Often, it comes when your loved one is in the hospital with a serious medical condition or injury. Choosing a home can be very difficult. Early planning and visiting can make this process easier.

You are the best judge of how many nursing homes you can visit, but try to see at least three so you can make comparisons. If possible, ask the loved one who will be living in the nursing home and other family members to visit the nursing homes with you.

Your visit will give you the chance to view care firsthand; talk to staff, residents, and other families; taste the food and observe the activities. It is always best to visit a facility at least twice. Make one of the visits unscheduled, during the weekend or evening, when staffing problems will be most obvious.

Talk with the nursing staff about the kind of care your loved one needs and make sure the facility can provide it.

- Is transportation available so the resident can visit his or her own doctor?
- Is physical therapy available for as long as the resident needs it?
- Does the staff have special training dealing with dementia?
- Are there special units, programs, or services for special needs such as Alzheimer's?

One thing to consider when choosing a nursing home is location. Try to find one that family and friends can visit often. People in nursing homes who have regular visitors usually get better care. Use your visits to observe carefully, and do not discount your personal feelings. The checklist in the Tip Sheet can help you compare the different facilities you visit.

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Facility Name _____

Address _____

Check: First Visit Second Visit Date(s) Visited: _____

Morning Afternoon Evening

Circle: Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat Sun

You may want to attach the facility's rate sheet for easier comparison.

The Basics:

Is the facility Medicare certified? Yes No

Is the facility Medicaid certified? Yes No

Has the license ever been revoked? Yes No

Is the facility accepting new patients? Yes No

Is there a waiting period for admission? Yes No

Does the facility conduct background checks on all of the staff? Yes No

How many licensed nurses are on duty at each shift? _____

RNs _____ LPNs _____

What is the patient to staff ratio? _____

Nurse to patient? _____ Aide to patient? _____

Does the nursing home have an active family council? Yes No

What is the visiting policy? _____

What is the facility's discharge policy? _____

Is transportation available so the resident can visit the doctor? Yes No

Are the care planning meetings held at times that are easy for residents and their family members to attend? Yes No

Safety:

- Are stairs and hallways well lighted? Yes No
- Are exits well marked? Yes No
- Do the hallways have handrails? Yes No
- Do rooms and bathrooms have grab bars and call buttons? Yes No
- Are there safety locks on the doors and windows? Yes No
- Are there security and fire safety systems? Yes No
- Is there an emergency generator or alternate power source? Yes No
- Is the floor plan logical and easy to follow? Yes No
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Care Issues:

- Does the facility have a fresh smell? Yes No
-
- Are residents clean and well groomed? Yes No
-
- Do staff interact well with residents? Yes No
-
- Are residents participating in activities and exercise? Yes No
- Do the residents have the same caregivers on a daily basis? Yes No
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- Does the staff respond quickly to calls for help? Yes No
- Is there fresh water available in the rooms? Yes No
- Does the food look and smell good? Yes No
- Are the residents offered choices of food at mealtimes? Yes No
-
- Are the residents who need assistance eating or drinking receiving it? Yes No
-
- Are there nutritious snacks available throughout the day and evening? Yes No
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Is physical therapy available for as long as the resident needs it? Yes No

Does the staff have special training to deal with dementia? Yes No

Are there special units, programs, or services for special needs, such as Alzheimer's? Yes No

Quality of Life:

Are residents' rights posted? Yes No

Does the staff knock before entering a resident's room? Yes No

Are the doors shut when a resident is being dressed or bathed? Yes No

Is the facility an easy place for family and friends to visit? Yes No

Does the nursing home meet cultural, religious, or language needs? Yes No

Does the nursing home have outdoor areas for residents and help for residents who want to spend time outside? Yes No

Are the residents allowed to make choices about daily routine (for example, when to go to bed, when to get up, when to bathe, or when to eat)? Yes No

Are the residents allowed to have personal articles and furniture in their rooms? Yes No

Is the staff friendly, considerate, and helpful? Yes No

Does the facility have a friendly, home-like environment? Yes No



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