

What To Expect When Visiting A Nursing Home

Things to Observe About the Staff

Is the staff actively using the privacy curtains to protect the dignity of residents receiving treatment?

Is the staff answering call lights promptly?

Does the staff appear happy and content in their jobs?

How do staff members interact with the residents? Are they courteous and friendly?

Do they smile and address residents by name?

How do staff members interact with you? Are they friendly to family members and willing to interact and answer questions?

Things to Observe About the Residents

Do the residents appear well groomed?

Are residents engaged in activity?

Do most residents appear content and happy?

(Remember that some residents have conditions that can make them appear unhappy or confused)

Questions to Ask About Medical Care Services

Does the facility have a current license from the state?

Does the nursing facility administrator have a current license from the state?

If not, do not use the facility.

If Medicare and/or Medicaid coverage is needed, is the home certified to provide such care?

Does the facility have an operating agreement with a nearby hospital for emergency services?

Is a physician available in an emergency?

Are personal physicians allowed?

How often are residents seen by a physician?

How are residents and families involved in treatment planning?

Are other medical services available (i.e. dentists, podiatrists, optometrists)?

Does the facility report periodically to the resident's personal physician on resident progress? To families?

What services does the facility provide for terminally ill residents and their families?

Does the facility work with a local hospice?

Does the facility have a program for residents with Alzheimer's disease?

How does the facility address pain management?

Is a licensed nurse always available?

Does a pharmacist review patient drug regimens?

Is there a physical therapy program available under the direction of a qualified physical therapist?

Are there services of an occupational therapist or speech pathologist available?
Is there a social worker available to assist residents and families?

Questions to Consider About Food

Do meals appear tasty and attractive? Ask to sample a meal. Does it taste good?

Do posted menus feature a variety of foods throughout the week?

Does food being served match the description on the posted menu?

Are the residents who need help eating being given the assistance?

Are snacks available?

How are resident food preferences handled? Are there substitutes for foods residents do not like?

Does a dietician plan menus for patients on special diets?

Questions to Consider About Activities

Are arrangements made for residents to worship or attend religious services?

How are residents encouraged to participate in activities?

How is resident activity preferences handled?

Are group and individual activities available?

Questions to Ask About Admission and Financial Practices

Are beds currently available? If not, is there a waiting list?

Are all services covered in the basic daily charge?

If not, is a list of specific services not covered in the basic rate available?
(i.e. schedules covering linen, personal laundry, beauty/barber services, pedicures, incontinence briefs, dental care, etc.)

Will the facility help you handle third-party billing? (Insurance)

Are advance payments returned if the patient leaves the home?

If my loved one is a private paying resident at the time of admission and later becomes eligible for Medicaid, will he or she be able to stay in the same bed and receive the same level of care? Is this in the admission contract?

Questions to Ask About Facility Policy/Procedures

Does the facility do pre-employment and/or periodic employee drug screening?

What are the facility's policies on the use of physical and chemical (drug) restraints?

Does the facility regularly survey residents or families to find out how satisfied they are with the quality of services the facility provides? If so, are they willing to share the results?

How does the facility match roommates?

Does the facility have a "visiting hours" policy? Are family members welcome to visit at any time?

How are disputes, problems, or complaints with the quality of care resolved?

Does the facility have a Resident Council? A Family Council?

How does the facility protect medical health information?

Questions to Ask Yourself?

Do I feel comfortable coming to the facility or leaving my loved one here?

Is the location of the facility convenient for frequent visits by family and friends?

Have I or my loved one had the opportunity to express wishes regarding the end-of-life care? (Living Will, Advanced Directives, Medical, Financial, Durable Power of Attorney)

**The above questions should serve as a starting point. Remember that visiting the facility you are considering several times will give you a true feeling for the facility. If you forget to ask a question, call back and ask. Making the decision to seek extended care is very difficult. Your feelings of guilt, anger, helplessness, and confusion will be eased if you know you made the best decision possible.*