



Guidelines for Choosing a Nursing Home



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Nursing Homes Overview

Nursing homes, also called skilled nursing facilities (SNF) or convalescent care facilities, provide a wide range of services. These services include nursing care, 24-hour supervision, assistance with activities of daily living (ADL) and rehabilitation services, such as physical, occupational and speech therapy. Some people need nursing home services for a short period of time for recovery or rehabilitation after a serious illness or operation, while others need longer stays because of chronic physical, health or cognitive conditions that require constant care or supervision. It is important to find the nursing facility that is right for you and your family member. The steps outlined in this document can guide you in finding the best facility for you and your family member.

The first step in selecting a nursing home is to determine your needs or the needs of your family member. You should get assistance from your doctor and other health care providers to help you assess your particular health needs. The next steps that you may want to take are as follows:

Develop a List of Facility Choices

When trying to find a nursing home that meets your needs, it is helpful to create a list of facilities. The list should consist of nursing homes in your geographic area that you would like to research further. The **georgiahealthinfo.gov** Web site can assist you in your search. Go to the "Search for Care" tab above to find compare nursing homes in your area.

Determine what Payment Types the Facility Accepts

The cost for nursing homes can vary depending on where you live and what type of care you need. Health insurance plans typically do not cover long-term care at home or in a nursing home. Medicare pays only for short-term medically necessary skilled care at a skilled nursing facility, rehabilitation facility or home health care. Most long-term care is to assist people with support services such as dressing, bathing and using the bathroom, which is often called custodial care. Custodial care is care that helps you with ADL. It may also include care that most people do for themselves.

Medicare does not pay for this type of care.

Check Availability and Services

Contact the individual facilities that you have on your list to find out about available space and services offered. If you are in need of a facility immediately, you can rule out those on your list that have a long waiting list. You can research facility specific services on **georgiahealthinfo.gov**.

Investigate the Facility Quality

Remember to ask about the facility's staffing patterns, the quality of the facility as determined by the number and type of deficiencies found during inspections, complaints that have been filed, and quality of life of the residents. It is very important that you investigate the quality of each of the facilities on your list. The **georgiahealthinfo.gov** Web site can assist you with this. The overall quality rankings of each nursing home in Georgia are listed. The quality rankings on this Web site were provided by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). To find out information on accreditation of nursing homes in your area, visit The Joint Commission Web site at **jointcommission.org**.

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Make a Visit to the Facility

It is very important for you and your family member to visit the nursing homes on the list that you have developed to make sure the facility will meet all of your needs as well as the needs of your family members. There are several things to consider when you are visiting the facility. You can use the *Nursing Home Checklist* located in the helpful tools section to assist you in making your decision. Feel free to talk with the staff and residents at the nursing home during your visit. Make sure you get all of your questions answered.

You can use the "Search For Care" application on the georgiahealthinfo.gov Web site to find a nursing home in your area.