

# What to Look For in a Nursing Home

**M**oving to a new home can be exciting, but also nerve-wracking—especially if you’ve spent years creating wonderful memories in the home you’re leaving behind. If you or a loved one has decided it’s time to move to a nursing home, you’ll want to find a community where you can look forward to a new and fulfilling chapter.

Chances are you’re already somewhat familiar with senior living options in your area. Word of mouth and reputation go a long way. But each community—and each person—is different. Do as much research as possible to find a place that’s right for you or your loved one.

## Online Research

If you know the general area you’d like to be, check out Medicare’s website Nursing Home Compare ([medicare.gov/nursinghomecompare/search.html](https://www.medicare.gov/nursinghomecompare/search.html)). It provides rankings on quality of care for more than 15,000 Medicare—or Medicaid—certified nursing homes in the United States. Simply enter a ZIP code, city and/or state to view rankings on retirement communities in that area.

## Take a Tour

Nothing compares to experiencing a facility firsthand. Take a tour and speak with residents and staff to get a sense of their communities, personalities, and the services they offer. But don’t

*“Schedule a visit and talk to the people living there. Talk to the staff. Get a sense of how the space feels. Does it feel welcoming and pleasant and warm? Those are signs that it’s the right place for you.”*

Annie Peace, Health Services Director, Meadowlark

just look at what they offer, also look at how they provide their care and services.

## Dig Deep

Whether online, by phone or in-person, ask lots of questions:

- What do the actual living spaces look like? Can you see them in person?
- Do they offer special events and activities for residents? How involved are the residents in selecting activities?
- What recreational amenities do they offer—movies, billiards or other activities?
- What health and wellness services and programs do they offer? Is there a physician on site? Can you take fitness classes?
- How easy is it to access nearby neighborhoods? Can you participate in events and activities outside of the nursing home?
- Do they have a restaurant? What’s on the menu? (Better yet, see if you can have a meal there. One of the most common questions nursing homes get is “How is the food?”)
- Will you have a say in your schedule and the activities you participate in? How flexible is the community?
- What happens if you need more advanced medical care? Can they continue to support you?
- What are visiting hours? Is there a welcoming space to accommodate your guests?
- How accessible are staff members? Is there a lot of turnover, especially at the leadership level?

Finally, the most important question you need to ask is whether you or your loved one can see yourselves happily living there. If a community can provide the services you need in a vibrant environment where you feel you can thrive, chances are you’ve found your new home.

