

This leaflet is part of a series written by nurses, doctors and experts with experience in aged care. The series aims to make your journey into residential aged care easier. Look for other leaflets on questions to ask about specific care needs. These can be downloaded at:

www.10questions.org.au

You may find these leaflets useful when:

- Searching for a high quality residential aged care facility
- Reviewing the quality of your current residential aged care facility
- Deciding between two residential aged care facilities that appear similar.

It's important there are enough registered nurses within the staff skill mix to meet everyone's needs. A single registered nurse per shift may not be enough to safely supervise and deliver care.

Many staff wear similar uniforms. Just because someone looks like a nurse does not mean they are. Here are the differences:

A **Registered Nurse (RN)** has undertaken a minimum three-year Bachelor of Nursing course. They can undertake nursing procedures, manage pain medication and help prevent unnecessary hospital admissions.

An **Enrolled Nurse (EN)** works under the direction of an RN. Both are registered by a regulatory body. Registration ensures professional standards are maintained and protects the public.

Assistants in Nursing (AIN)/Care Workers/ Care Service Employees (CSE) work under the supervision and direction of nurses and provide most of the care in residential aged care facilities and community. Their level of training and roles vary.



IT'S YOUR RIGHT TO ASK

The best way to find a residential aged care facility that suits you is to visit a few.

For further advice contact

Palliative Care NSW ☎ (02) 8076 5600
www.palliativecarensw.org.au

To find your local ones, or for more information about aged care services contact

My Aged Care ☎ 1800 200 422
myagedcare.gov.au

This leaflet has been developed and endorsed by:



For a full list of supporting organisations please visit
www.10questions.org.au

If you have concerns about a residential aged care facility contact:

☎ 1800 951 822



Australian Government
Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission

www.agedcarequality.gov.au



10 Questions to Ask

ABOUT PALLIATIVE CARE IN RESIDENTIAL AGED CARE



www.10questions.org.au

Palliative care may be provided when someone has an illness that's likely to cause death within the foreseeable future. This may vary from a few days to years. For many residents, the staff in the aged care facility will be able to provide the care needed. However some residents may need specialist palliative care involvement. The following questions will help you find out whether the facility can manage your changing needs in the final stage of your life.

1 How do you assess resident's palliative care needs?

Staff should be able to carry out, or support a thorough assessment of any palliative care needs you might have. This should focus on maximising your quality of life, your comfort and wishes and take into account your health condition.

2 How will you ensure my wishes and values are upheld at end-of-life?

Right at the start of your care the staff should be having conversations with you about your end-of-life choices and wishes, this is called advance care planning discussions. You may opt to make a formal Advance Care Plan and Advance Care Directive*. In any case, a plan of care that clearly identifies your end of life choices should be written and staff fully aware of this. This is particularly useful in an emergency or if you are unable to communicate as your needs change.

3 What palliative care training do staff receive?

Knowledge and experience may vary depending on whether a staff member is a care worker or an experienced registered nurse. All staff should be trained in palliative care when they are first employed and then given regular updates.

4 How will staff recognise when I'm close to dying and what processes are in place for this?

Ask if staff have been trained to recognise signs of dying and know how to respond appropriately. There should be registered nurses on site at all times to manage your care and supervise the care team.

5 What support will there be for my loved ones when I'm close to dying?

Ask how your loved ones will be told about your changing condition and whether they can stay overnight if you need them. Check if there are restrictions on visiting times.

6 What arrangements are in place for my spiritual and cultural needs?

If you have particular cultural or religious needs or preferences ask how these can be met and check or that external visits can be facilitated. You have the right to have your identity, culture and diversity valued and supported. You should be given a copy of the *Charter of Aged Care Rights* which outlines these rights.

7 Do you have access to specialist palliative care services?

Palliative care specialists provide outreach support to advise and support your regular GP and staff if they need expert advice. They also provide support to you and your loved ones/family. This service is not available in all areas. In this circumstance, check the arrangements for staff to access specialist advice and support if your care needs become more complex.

8 How many staff are present including evenings, weekends and night duty?

Ask how many nurses and care staff are present on each shift and consider if this would be enough given the size of the place and needs of people living there. Having at least one registered nurse (RN) on each shift may reduce the chances of hospital admissions, so ask how many are employed.

9 How will you ensure I have timely access to medications when I am dying?

You may need access to injectable medications to manage distress like pain and breathing. This should be managed by the RN on duty and your GP. The local health district palliative care team can also provide support. Ideally, staff should anticipate your needs and have the medications ready just in case you need them. This reduces any distress you may experience and ensures your family know that medications will be administered quickly. Make sure there's enough registered nurses available to administer these medications.#

10 What specialist equipment do you provide?

You may require a specialist mattress and/or equipment to keep you comfortable and safe. Some places charge for these so check what's included and what additional charges you might incur. Remember your needs may change so think about what you might need in the future when working out extra costs.

*Advance Care Planning is the process of planning for your future health care. It relates to health care you would or would not like to receive if you were to become seriously ill or injured and are unable to communicate your preferences or make decisions. Ideally, this will result in your preferences being documented in a plan known as an Advance Care Directive and the appointment of a substitute decision-maker to help ensure your preferences are respected. Advance Care Directives differ between states and territories. Some state and territory governments have specific forms you can use. You can learn more by visiting www.advancecareplanning.org.au # see leaflet on staffing