



6 Steps to Getting Quality Care in a Nursing Home

The best way to achieve quality care is to work with the nursing home to meet your needs. Below are some ways in which you can actively participate and monitor your care.

1. Be Informed

- Learn what your rights and the nursing home's responsibilities are. Ask the facility to go over your rights with you.
- Know what care and services you are supposed to receive. This information is in your care plan, so make sure to always have a copy of your most recent plan.
- Ask questions.

2. Create a Circle of Support

- Develop a group of family members, friends and other people you trust who can assist in advocating for the care you want.

3. Participate in Your Care Plan

- Let the nursing home staff know that you want to be involved in reviewing or developing your plan.
- Consider asking someone from your circle of support and/or the staff person who is most familiar with you and whom you trust to attend your care plan meetings with you.
- Make a list of questions, comments or concerns you have. Bring this list to the care plan meeting.
- Speak up at the meeting! Tell the staff what you want and need.
- Ask for a copy of the care plan after it has been created or revised.
- Ask that the care plan be changed if it is not working for you or if your condition changes.

4. Develop a Positive Relationship with Staff

- Talk to the facility about assigning the same aides to provide care and services to you. This will help ensure the best outcomes.
- Get to know your aides.
- Treat all staff with respect and appreciation.

5. Communication Tips

- Ask a question if something is unclear. State what you mean directly, respectfully and in language that is free of blame or judgment. Try to ask a question, not make an accusation.
- Make sure to thank staff for their help.
- If the nursing home staff tells you they cannot do something because the “state” or the “rules” do not allow it, politely ask them to show you the document where this information is written down. Ask for more information from your local ombudsman (see below).
- Keep notes. Write down any problems or incidents that occur. Be sure to include the date, time, person(s) involved, and what action(s) were taken by staff/administration. This information will help in communicating your concerns at a later date if problems continue.

6. Know where to turn with questions and concerns

- Find out which staff person to contact and how to reach them.
- Connect with the resident or family council if there is one. The council can help answer questions or communicate your concern to facility administration.
- If you would like free, unbiased advice, consider contacting:
 - State/Local Long-Term Care Ombudsman.
Ombudsmen work to resolve complaints on behalf of long-term care residents; they can answer questions, give suggestions, offer assistance and support, or address issues you may have. Go to <http://www.ltombudsman.org/ombudsman> to locate your state ombudsman or call the Consumer Voice at (202) 332-2275 or toll free at (866) 992-3668. Contact information for the ombudsman program should also be posted in your nursing home.
 - Citizen Advocacy Groups.
These local or state organizations advocate for quality long-term care. Go to <http://www.theconsumervoice.org/ombudsman> and click on your state to connect with a representative from the citizen advocacy group in your area.

Additional Resources

- For more information on how to get quality care in a nursing home, refer to *Nursing Homes: Getting Good Care There* at <https://www.theconsumervoice.org/catalog/nursing-home-getting-good-care-there>.
- For more in-depth information on these and other related topics, see the *Piecing Together Quality Long-Term Care Guide* produced by the Consumer Voice http://www.theconsumervoice.org/piecing-together-quality-long-term-care/pdf#National_Guide.