

# Questions to Ask a Care Facility



Take this list of questions with you when visiting an assisted living facility, nursing home, or adult family home.

1. What is included with your 'doctor care' service:
  - a. Does he/she actually see patients or just review records and give orders?
  - b. How often does the doctor see residents?
  - c. Can you meet with the doctor?
  - d. If you are POA, will you want to have approval of medications?
  - e. How quickly are you contacted in the event of an emergency, fall, or illness?
2. What is involved with your 'nursing care' service:
  - a. What can a nurse offer in terms of care?
  - b. What is the nurse's level of licensing?
  - c. What is the ratio of nurses to Certified Nursing Assistants?
  - d. What is the ratio of care staff to residents?
3. How frequently do you check on residents:
  - a. Coming to meals
  - b. Encourage them to participate in activities
4. If residents share a room and the roommate is not compatible, can they change?
  - a. YES
  - b. NO
5. Is there a social worker on staff?
  - a. ALWAYS
  - b. SOMETIMES
  - c. NEVER

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6. Do you provide the residents with your own transportation?

- a. ALWAYS
- b. SOMETIMES
- c. NEVER

7. Do you rely on public transportation to transport residents?

- a. ALWAYS
- b. SOMETIMES
- c. NEVER

8. Tell me about your laundry care:

- a. Frequency?
- b. Hot water and industrial tubs?

9. How do you monitor diets:

- a. Is there a nutritionist on staff?
- b. Do you offer flexible meal options?
- c. What happens if a resident stops eating?

10. What is included in the monthly or annual cost:

- a. TV?
- b. Internet?
- c. Phone?
- d. Medication Management?
- e. Entertainment?
- f. Hygiene?
- g. Meals?

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11. What about housekeeping:

- a. How often?
- b. What is the scope of cleaning services included?
- c. Are the housekeepers insured?
- d. Are the housekeepers part of your normal staff or contracted out?

12. What sort of activities are offered and how often:

- a. Are outings offered to those who are mobile?
- b. Is mobility assistance available?
- c. Is there an onsite Activities Director?
- d. What types, and how many, activities are planned in a week?
- e. How are residents informed of the activities offered?
- f. Look at a sample schedule or ask to attend an activity.

13. How often do you hold family care planning meetings and how will I be notified when they take place?

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14. What happens if my loved one experiences an emergency?

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15. What else should I know?

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## When Is It Time to Step In?

There comes a time in the adult lives of children and their parents when it dawns on you that you might have to step in and be more active in your parents' lives, not as a child but as a caregiver. For every family, that time seems to come as a shock.

It's strange because we all see reports on television about the transition that we go through when the parent becomes the dependent one and the child becomes the one making decisions in the relationship. And the hardest part of that transition may be the first time you have to step in and "stage an intervention" because there is an area of life that your parent needs to let go of and you know they won't want to. So what are the signs that it's time to step in and suggest or directly take action to make that change in your parents lives?

When it comes to driving, your dad or mom's doctor will be able to help by determining if your parents are physically able to drive any more. When the senior citizen's eyesight dims to where he or she cannot distinguish details in the distance or when depth perception is poor so he might not be able to judge where the intersection is or if he is stopped at the stoplight or in the middle of the intersection, the time is right for Grandpa to give up the keys and let someone else do the driving.



The time to start the process of moving mom or dad out of their own home and into an assisted living facility may be more tricky to determine. As with driving, the senior citizen will mount every effort to appear to be competent to continue to live independently. That ability to live on our own, go where we want when we want to and take care of our own needs is so fundamental to who we are and to our self esteem that this transition from living on their own to living where everything is done for them is emotionally difficult to be sure.

So you as family members and as the caregiver for your parent need to watch for the signs that your parent's ability to take care of the house and of themselves living independently has come. Some of the symptoms of the need for change are...

- How is your mom or dad's health holding up? Are they eating well? Check the pantry and the refrigerator. Is it full of good things to eat, fresh foods and lots of supplies for cooking or is it sparse showing that going to the grocery store is a trial for your parent?
- Are your parents taking care of themselves? When you come over, do they look like they are sleeping ok? Are they groomed and clean and are their clothes clean and ready to use or is everything wrinkled because it's too hard to do the laundry and press shirts and blouses?
- How does the house look? Is it in good repair? Is it picked up and the kitchen clean with everything put away? If mom was always meticulous about her kitchen and now it's always a mess, she is having trouble keeping up with the housework.



- Does mom or dad stay home all the time? If they were normally outgoing and always up for a car trip, an outing to church or even just the grocery store or even an adventure, becoming a homebody signals that they don't want to go through the trouble of getting fixed up to go out.

Of all these symptoms, probably the one that signals the time to step in and take action is immediate if your elderly parent falls or goes to the floor and then cannot get up. If your mom or dad has to pass the night on the living room floor because they could not get up and had to sleep there until someone showed up to help them, that's an emergency situation that calls for immediate action.

Talk to your elderly parent about the risks of living alone, particularly in a scary thing like being unable to get up. By the time such a frightening incident happens, your parent may be suspecting the time to go somewhere where they can live with greater security and safety is here.



# Making a difference *together*

There is something very self-absorbed about the caregiver to senior citizen relationship. By that, I mean that most if not all of the decisions you make, and subjects of concern focus either on the senior citizen and her needs or on the caregiver and the senior citizen and how you will work together to address her needs.

It's no wonder, then, when we think about what your elderly parent talked about all day, it tends to be one thing: himself! And by nature of their relationship, a conversation between caregiver and cared-for often circles around the needs of the one being cared for. As they age and their abilities slip away, their world slowly begins to downsize. The ability to drive, the ability to use the restroom, the ability to care for themselves... Their whole worldview shrinks just as yours is quite possibly getting larger.

But we know from raising children that having an ego-centric worldview can be unhealthy. It's easy to become a hypochondriac and overwhelmed when the world starts and stops at your doorstep.

## Volunteer Activities to Do Together:

- Pick up trash on a slow walk
- Visit someone else in the retirement community that he or she knows is lonely and would enjoy company.
- Stuff envelopes or make phone calls for your church or a charity organization.
- Read to disadvantaged kids at the local library.
- Become a big brother or big sister and take a young person to a ball game or to the zoo.

# Making a difference

*together*



- Volunteer vacations.
- Join gardening clubs.
- Life story exercises.

Most cities have a volunteer coordination agency that can match up your physical abilities with volunteer opportunities. Once you get your elderly parent involved in doing something for others, don't be surprised if their enthusiasm takes off.

The great feeling of making a difference for others can literally turn his or her life around. Enjoy the chatter that's sure to come. You'll soon realize just how much your loved one's life has transformed when requests for more time to volunteer start pouring in. And that's a good thing.