

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.

Residential aged care facilities utilize a range of different staff with different levels of qualifications and experience. It's important to ask the right questions if you need care.

Many staff wear similar uniforms. Just because someone looks like a nurse or allied health practitioner 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.

An **Allied Health Professional** has undertaken a minimum three-year Bachelor course in their profession as well as undertaking continuing professional development. They have specific expertise in providing care for a range of health conditions.

Assistants in Nursing (AIN)/Care Workers/ Care Service Employees (CSE) are unregistered. They provide most of the care in residential facilities and community but their level of training is variable. They may work under the supervision of a Registered Nurse or Allied Health Professional.



IT'S YOUR RIGHT TO ASK

If you require advocacy or specialist advice about any matter not covered in this leaflet:

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

More information about the different types of allied health services is available through:

Allied Health Professions Australia
www.ahpa.com.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:



10 Questions to Ask

ABOUT ALLIED HEALTH IN RESIDENTIAL AGED CARE



www.10questions.org.au

Allied health practitioners (Physiotherapists, Dietitians, Podiatrists etc.) work across a variety of health disciplines to assess and manage a broad range of health conditions. Their focus is on preventing unnecessary hospitalisation and deterioration of your health, to help you remain independent and able to participate in daily life activities. Access to the right allied health services can make a significant difference to your quality of life and wellbeing.

1 What allied health services do you provide?

Not all aged care facilities provide access to allied health services, so check what services are available. The role of allied health professionals varies depending on their specialist area. Allied health professionals can assist with many conditions commonly experienced in older age including: chronic pain; speech, hearing and vision impairment; depression and anxiety; memory loss and cognitive impairment; mobility difficulties; nutritional deficits and swallowing difficulties.

2 How do I access allied health services?

Ask whether allied health services can be provided in the facility and what types of services are available, as access to allied health services can vary greatly. You may need to access some services in a location outside of the facility such as a community clinic.

3 Do I have to pay for allied health services?

If your care is Government-funded, you are entitled to receive services and equipment based on your needs. This means that if allied health services are assessed as being required for your clinical needs, the

aged care facility should provide these free of charge. If you would like to access allied health services beyond those assessed as necessary to meet your needs, you may have to pay for them. If you can't afford to pay, you can apply for financial hardship assistance.

4 What qualifications do the allied health professionals you use have?

All allied health professionals must have university training to become health practitioners. An allied health assistant or aged care worker is not qualified to provide allied health services independently. They must be supervised by a qualified allied health practitioner if providing allied health support.

5 Who delivers allied health services in this facility?

Only an allied health professional can provide allied health services. However, a combination of allied health practitioners, allied health assistants and/ or aged care workers are often used to deliver care. It's important to check who will deliver your care, what training they receive and how they are supervised.

6 Who makes referrals for allied health professionals?

A GP, registered nurse or other health practitioner can help identify the most appropriate services for you and make a referral. A referral is not always required unless you are seeking a rebate for the service from your private health fund or Medicare. Some services like optometry are Medicare-funded and don't need a referral.

7 How will you ensure I am receiving appropriate allied health care?

Your care needs should be assessed by staff on admission or before, and

a care plan written that you agree to. This can help identify the allied health services you need, and why. Staff should also explain how these services will be funded and if you need to contribute to their cost.

8 How can you support me to continue to see my preferred allied health professional?

If you prefer to keep your current allied health services, you can arrange this - but do talk with staff and let them know this is your choice. You may incur additional costs for travel and for staff to go with you, if you have to travel to see a health professional.

9 Do you provide access to assistive technology or equipment?

The aged care facility should provide access to any aids and equipment you require to meet your assessed care needs. This includes provision of equipment like specialist bedding and chairs. However, it does not usually include motorised wheelchairs and other custom made aids. If an allied health professional recommends you obtain specialist technology or equipment they should explain how you may access these and what the cost would be.

10 Do you provide access to mental health services?

Many facilities do not provide access to allied health mental health services. If you require support to manage mental health difficulties such as depression or anxiety, it is important that you discuss your needs with your aged care provider. You may have to pay for services privately, although eligible DVA clients may be able to access allied health care if a GP has made a referral.*

* Read the 10 Questions leaflet on Mental Health for more information