

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.

By law, residential aged care facilities are not required to have registered nurses so it's important to ask the right questions if you need nursing 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) are unlicensed. They provide most of the care in residential facilities and community but their level of training is variable.



IT'S YOUR RIGHT TO ASK

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

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:



Australian Government
 Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission

 1800 951 822

www.agedcarequality.gov.au



10 Questions to Ask

ABOUT RURAL AND REMOTE RESIDENTIAL AGED CARE



www.10questions.org.au

Receiving care in rural and remote locations does not compromise your right to safe, timely and quality healthcare. However, depending on your location the way care is delivered may vary.

1 What if there is no residential aged care facility in my home town?

If there's no residential aged care facility in your home town, there may be other alternatives to suit you such as a Multipurpose Health Service (MPS). Or you may have to consider relocating to a nearby town to access residential care. Check with *MyAgedCare** what is available locally.

2 What is the difference between a residential aged care facility and a MPS?

Residential aged care is permanent or temporary accommodation providing continuous supported care, ranging from help with daily tasks and personal care to 24-hour nursing care. MPS are integrated health services usually run from small public hospitals. Aged care beds could be allocated within the main hospital or as a separate unit. These are generally run more like hospitals, so it's important to check who will be organising outings and activities and how frequently these sorts of things happen.

3 Are Registered Nurses (RNs) on site at all times?

Not all services employ RNs at all times. If you require 24 hour nursing care then you may need to travel further away to find a place that provides this. If on-call nursing services are used, check how long you may have to wait for a nurse to attend. This may make the

difference between getting prompt treatment, having to wait or attending your nearest hospital if you get ill. If an RN isn't on duty a local General Practitioner (GP) may be called. Rural GPs may charge for visits, or may not be available locally so check arrangements and if you have to pay.

4 How will I keep in touch with my community?

Check if there are arrangements for day trips back home and if you have to pay for transport costs. Visiting hours can vary so ask if you can have visitors to stay overnight and if rooms are provided for them. Check if you can have a phone in your room to call friends/family and internet access. There may be an additional charge for these services.

5 Can I keep my local GP?

If you are moving outside the area serviced by your usual GP, you may not be able to keep them. Discuss which GPs are able to visit if that will affect your choice. If you have to change GPs ask your current one to forward your medical records to the new one so they know your medical history. Continuity of care is important, particularly if you have dementia or are unable to explain your symptoms.

6 Does the GP visit, or is there a telehealth model?

If a local GP is based some distance away, telehealth may be used. This allows GPs to see you online to manage your care. In these circumstances GPs rely heavily on RNs to carry out their recommended treatment, so it is important to check their availability. Getting new or repeat medications on time is important, so check what arrangements are in place, as your nearest pharmacy may also be some distance away.

7 Is there palliative care available?

Palliative care is care of a person with a life limiting illness. This can range from ensuring the person is pain free to looking after their skin and relieving other symptoms. Sometimes a specialist palliative care team may be needed to provide advice. Check if staff are trained in palliative care and whether there is a visiting specialist palliative care team available to provide assistance.

8 What will happen to me if there is an emergency or disaster?

Many rural facilities are in bush fire zones so it is important to know if there is a bush fire plan for evacuation and acquiring alternative medical care and treatment. Your nearest hospital may be several hours away so check how your needs will be met, especially if your medical equipment requires power.

9 Will I have access to allied health professionals?

Allied health professionals comprise a wide range of disciplines who play an important role as part of the health care team. They are involved in assessing and managing many health conditions and can help with keeping you active in your daily life. Ask what allied health services are available in your area, and if you will have to pay extra for these.

10 How will my family/loved ones know if something happens?

Check the arrangements that are in place to inform loved ones as soon as there is any sort of change as they may need to travel a long way to get to you.

*Contact details are included on the back of this leaflet