

Ministry of Long-Term Care

Checklist: Visiting a long-term care home

Things to look for and questions to ask.

There's a lot to think about with any move, and choosing a long-term care home can feel especially challenging. Using a checklist when you visit can help you make sure you've covered all the bases.

The list below is extensive. We suggest:

- making your own short list of the things that matter to you most
- reading through this list before your visit and crossing out anything that isn't relevant to your situation
- asking questions and taking notes during your visit. Sample questions are included in the right-hand column.

Outside and around the home

Checklist

Location

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> The home is easy to get to | <input type="checkbox"/> The home is accessible by public transit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> It is easy to find parking at the home | |

Appearance

- Home and grounds look clean, well-maintained
- Attractive outdoor spaces for residents to sit or walk

Neighborhood facilities

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Specialty medical services nearby (for example, dialysis) | <input type="checkbox"/> Library |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shopping | <input type="checkbox"/> Park |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Place of worship |

Questions to ask / Notes

Inside the home

Checklist

Home maintenance

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Home is clean | <input type="checkbox"/> Odour-free |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Well maintained | <input type="checkbox"/> Acceptable noise level |

Ambience

- Home is nicely decorated and has a pleasant feel

Accessibility

- Halls and doorways are wide enough for people using wheelchairs or walkers
- Wheelchairs are well maintained

Amenities

Does the home have:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Common lounge area | <input type="checkbox"/> A library (if not, you might want to ask if there is a visiting library service) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhere to meet privately with visitors | <input type="checkbox"/> An area for worship |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wifi and technology available to set up virtual visits | <input type="checkbox"/> A tuck shop |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A fitness or exercise space | <input type="checkbox"/> Palliative care room(s) with somewhere for family members to sleep |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A recreation room (for games or crafts) | |

Questions to ask / Notes

How many residents live in the home?

How many floors are there? Are there enough elevators so residents can get from floor-to-floor reasonably quickly?

Is there a secure wing for residents who wander, have dementia or serious behaviour problems?

How many residents live there?

Residents' rooms

Checklist

Does the room have:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Air conditioning | <input type="checkbox"/> A bedside table for every resident |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A personal call bell system with buttons in easy reach (if so, who is on-call to answer it?) | <input type="checkbox"/> Sufficient, safe storage for personal items |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A privacy curtain to separate beds (if not a private room) | <input type="checkbox"/> Seating for visitors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Firm, comfortable beds | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal touches (do people have family pictures, their own furniture, etc.) |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Cable TV and internet access? If yes, what are the costs for these? |

Questions to ask / Notes

What are the home's policies regarding housekeeping?

- How often are personal clothes laundered?
- Is there somewhere on site where residents can do their own laundry?
- How often are wheelchairs and walkers cleaned?

What happens if a resident's personal belongings or clothes are lost?

If a personal belonging breaks (for example, a personal chair) who is responsible for the repair?

Washrooms

Checklist

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Private washroom or shared. If shared, number of other residents using it: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Easily accessed call buttons |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ensuite (attached to the bedroom) or located near the bedroom | <input type="checkbox"/> Handrails and grab bars at toilets, baths and showers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clean, odour-free and in good repair (for example, tiles are not chipped) | <input type="checkbox"/> Walk-in shower option for people able to use one |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Easily accommodate mobility devices | <input type="checkbox"/> Well supplied with clean towels |

Questions to ask / Notes

How often are the washrooms cleaned?

How often do residents get a shower or bath?

Food and dining

Checklist

Dining area

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Easily accessed by people using mobility devices | <input type="checkbox"/> Spacious |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Well lit | <input type="checkbox"/> Nicely decorated, inviting |

Alternative eating areas

- Are there other places to eat besides the dining room
- Are there places where visiting families can eat together

Mealtimes

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> People are brought to the dining room in a timely manner | <input type="checkbox"/> Meals are served soon after residents are seated |
|---|---|

- There are enough staff members to help residents
- Staff encourage residents to eat and drink
- Staff sit and help residents eat and drink where necessary (rather than standing over them)

- Residents are helped individually
- Staff do not rush residents
- Staff clean up after residents

Food

- Meals look appetizing and nutritious
- Portions are large enough and residents are offered second helpings
- Residents receive enough to drink at meal times and with all snacks

Questions to ask / Notes

What times are meals served?

Can residents have meals at unscheduled times?

Can residents have breakfast in their own rooms?

Can residents choose where they eat (example, own room, other dining area)?

Can family members stay for a meal? If so, is there a fee?

Are snacks and drinks available throughout the day?

Ask to see a current or sample menu. Does it appeal to you?

Do the meals suit your cultural or religious needs?

Can residents choose from a selection of meals or snacks?

Is the food prepared fresh on site?

Are menus posted online for family to see?

Staff

Checklist

- Smile and appear cheerful, friendly and approachable
- Address residents by name
- Show warmth and caring towards residents
- Treat residents, family and other staff with courtesy, dignity and respect
- Respond quickly to calls for help
- Communicate well with residents who are cognitively impaired
- Help residents change their positions in chairs or beds regularly and ensure they are upright (not slumped over)
- Are willing to answer questions and discuss needs of residents with family members

Questions to ask / Notes

How many hours of care are provided per resident?

How many personal support workers and nurses are there per resident for each shift?

Would the same staff be assigned to take care of you every day?

Are there staff members trained specifically to work with residents with specific impairments (such as, visual or hearing)?

Are any staff members trained in Gentle Persuasive Approach for people with dementia?

- Does the home have a volunteer program?
- How many people volunteer at the home?
- What are the roles and duties of volunteers?

Residents

Checklist

When you observe other residents, do they:

- look clean, well groomed, neatly dressed
- seem to enjoy being with staff
- seem to trust and feel secure with staff (they do not appear to fear harm from anyone)
- seem busy and occupied in a meaningful activity during the day

Questions to ask / Notes

What is the home's policy on restraining residents?

Health care

Checklist

- Is there a full-time, on-site medical director on site?

Does the home have a medical team that includes specialists such as a:

- gerontologist (specializes in elderly patients)
- dentist

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> audiologist (hearing specialist) | <input type="checkbox"/> ophthalmologist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> otolaryngologist/ENT (ear, nose and throat specialist) | <input type="checkbox"/> podiatrist |

Is specialized care available for:

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> memory care | <input type="checkbox"/> diabetes management | <input type="checkbox"/> palliative care |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|

Questions to ask / Notes

Can you continue receiving care from your family doctor after you've moved in?

Will you be seen by a doctor regularly or only if there's a change in your condition?

Under what circumstances are residents transferred to hospitals?

What policies does the home have in place to protect residents from infectious diseases?

What is the home's program for:

- preventing falls
- skin and wound care
- toileting
- pain management
- restorative care

Who will escort you to appointments?

Who arranges transportation to appointments?

Is there a fee for transportation to appointments?

Does the home have an arrangement with a nearby hospital or other healthcare facilities (such as, dialysis)

Who is the home's pharmacy service provider?

How is medication given and monitored?

What special needs can the home accommodate (for example, oxygen, scooters, electric wheelchairs)?

Daily life and activities

Checklist

Is the home able to meet your religious, cultural and language needs?

Ask to see a copy of the social calendar and activity calendar. Are there activities that take place:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoors | <input type="checkbox"/> On weekends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Away from the home | <input type="checkbox"/> On holidays |
| <input type="checkbox"/> During the evenings | |

Questions to ask / Notes

Do residents have input into the activities offered?

Are activity costs included in the accommodation costs?

Are there activities for residents who can't leave their beds or their rooms?

How many TVs are available? Where are they? Who decides what to watch?

What type of phone (for example, shared, personal, cell) is available for residents?

Does the home provide residents with tablets (if yes, are they connected to wifi)?

To what extent does the home accommodate personal routines and preferences. For example can you choose:

- when to go to bed and wake up
- to take a shower or have a bath
- activities or ways to spend your time

What is the smoking policy?

What is the policy for drinking alcohol?

What are the rules regarding vacation or leaving for a day trip?

Do any pets live in the home?

What additional fee-based services does the home offer, and if so, what do they cost? Examples are:

- hairdressing
- foot care
- transportation

Family involvement

Questions to ask / Notes

What are the visiting hours? Are they flexible?

For what services are family or loved ones responsible?

Can family or loved ones hire private-duty nurses for extra care?

How does the home communicate changes in the resident's condition to family or loved ones?

Which care providers provide regular updates to family or loved ones?

Can family members participate in activities or outings?

Not all long-term care homes have a family council, but all must offer an opportunity to form one.

- Does the home have a family council?
- How often does it meet?
- How does the home ensure family or loved ones know about council meetings?
- What issues have been raised by the council?
- How have these issues been addressed?