

## Choosing the Right Aged Care Home for People with Dementia

The following checklist can help you to find the home most suited to you or the person with the dementia whom you support. This guide can also be useful when comparing different facilities and the services they offer.

When choosing a home, there are many aspects to consider beyond the outer appearance of a newly built, state-of-the-art aged care facility. The word “home” says it all. Is the facility you have in mind home-like?

Various levels of care are available from assisted home care to residential care when living at home is no longer possible. The right choice will vary according to each person’s stage of dependence, mobility or dementia.

### Types of care:

**Home and Community Care (HACC)** – is a Government initiative and assists with support services that can enable elderly people to continue living independently in their own homes. Services include: nursing and personal care, home help and maintenance, meals on wheels, counseling, support, transport, ancillary services and assessment.

**Flexible care** – Enquire through Department of Health and Ageing or Aged Care Australia about the various extended aged care packages available to help care for people with dementia in their own homes. Packages provide access to various services, including nursing and personal care assistance.

**Respite Care** – short-term accommodation to give carers a break or the opportunity to travel, relax and recharge their *spark*. Respite care can also sometimes act as an introduction to residential care.

**Low Care** – hostel type accommodation is designed to provide individuals with some assistance with personal care yet remain relatively independent.

**High Care** – nursing home accommodation is suitable for people requiring frequent nursing and needing personal assistance with eating, toileting, bathing, dressing and mobility.

**Dementia specific facilities** – provide care at hostel and/or nursing home levels and feature secure physical environments specifically designed to meet the needs of people with dementia.

### Some tips to help you find the most suitable residential aged care facility:

1. Make an appointment to visit the facility of your choice.
2. Ask the name and position of the person who will be showing you around.
3. Keep in mind that the emotional care of people with dementia is far more important than a luxurious décor.
4. Walk around and listen to how staff members interact with the residents:
5. Do they treat the residents with respect or do they talk down to them?
6. Do they talk over the residents as if they are not there?
7. Do they allow and encourage residents to maintain their independence and use the abilities and skills they still have?
8. Do they react positively to residents’ needs and wishes; or are these needs overridden?

9. Are the residents' self-esteem boosted?
10. Is the atmosphere one of kindness and love; or is it one of rules and routines?
11. Are residents offered activities to help them improve and maintain memory?
12. Do staff speak to one another courteously?
13. Do staff hurry?
14. Is the atmosphere stressed?
15. Are you made to feel welcome?

**Practical considerations:**

1. Is the facility home-like and welcoming?
2. What is the attitude of staff (at all levels) assisting you during your visit?
3. Does each resident have a secure space for their personal and special belongings?
4. Do the same staff members continuously care for the people with dementia, or do the staff rotate within the facility?
5. Does the person showing you around ask genuine and interested questions about special needs and preferences?
6. If entry level is low care, is there access to move into high care/nursing home?
7. Can a family member stay overnight if needed?
8. Are you welcome to look all around the home, or only designated areas?
9. Is the home fresh, clean and well maintained?
10. What specific care and assistance will be provided?
11. Can residents bring their own furniture and decorate their rooms to suit individual tastes?

12. Are residents allowed to hang ornaments and/or frames on their room walls?
13. Is there easy access to safe, sun smart outdoor areas?
14. How many staff does the facility have and are they registered nurses, enrolled nurses, trained carers?
15. How many staff provide care overnight?
16. Will the resident be accompanied to hospital should the need arise?
17. Can residents keep their own doctor?
18. Are meaningful day-to-day activities both allowed and encouraged?
19. Does the facility offer a well-implemented, positive activity program for all resident levels?
20. Are single rooms available?
21. Are bathrooms en-suite or shared?
22. Is the facility close enough to allow for visits from family and friends?
23. Does the facility allow pets?
24. Are individual religious and cultural affiliations accommodated?
25. Is it clearly evident to someone with dementia how to find toilets and assistance within the facility?
26. What outside services are provided e.g. podiatry, hairdressing, physiotherapy etc?
27. Do you understand the costs and agreements associated with care?  
  
Agreements to enter aged care are legally binding documents and as such you should seek advice from a qualified legal representative before signing.

**You are also within your rights to ask prospective facilities the following:**

**Accreditation record** – Each home is subject to accreditation tri-annually. Can you view the facility's accreditation report?

**Complaints Management** – How are these handled within the home/hostel? Is there a register where you can view previous concerns and complaints? (Check to see if there are common complaints or if the same issues keep arising.)

**Source:**

[http://www.dementiacareaustralia.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=70&Itemid=42](http://www.dementiacareaustralia.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=70&Itemid=42)