



Choosing a Care Facility Checklist

Bring this on every facility tour. Take notes. Trust your gut.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

- The facility smells clean — not strongly of urine or chemicals
- The building is clean, well-lit, and well-maintained
- Residents appear comfortable, clean, and engaged
Look at the residents — not just the lobby.
- Staff speak to residents by name and with warmth
- You feel welcome and comfortable during the visit

ASK THESE QUESTIONS ON THE TOUR

- What is the staff-to-resident ratio during the day?
- What is the staff-to-resident ratio at night and on weekends?
Understaffing is most common on nights and weekends.
- What is the staff turnover rate?
High turnover means unhappy staff — and inconsistent care.
- How are medical emergencies handled?
- What activities are offered — and how often?
- Can my parent bring personal furniture and belongings?
- What is the process for handling complaints?
- How are family members kept informed about changes in care?

COSTS AND CONTRACTS

- Get a full written list of what is included in the base price
- Ask what costs extra — medication management, laundry, transport
Extra charges add up quickly. Get everything in writing.
- Ask about the fee increase history over the past 3 years

Understand the move-out policy if care needs increase

Have an elder law attorney review the contract before signing
Never sign a facility contract under pressure without reviewing it.

AFTER THE VISIT

Check state inspection records — these are public information
Search your state's long-term care ombudsman website.

Look up the facility on Medicare's Care Compare tool at [medicare.gov](https://www.medicare.gov)
Medicare rates every nursing home on a 5-star scale.

Talk to a current resident's family member if possible

Visit again unannounced at a different time of day
A second unannounced visit shows the real day-to-day experience.

Trust your instincts — if something felt wrong, it probably was

*This checklist is for informational purposes only. Always visit in person and consult professionals before making housing decisions.
[takingcareofmomanddad.org](https://www.takingcareofmomanddad.org) — Free resources for family caregivers*