

Nursing Homes

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Nursing homes are a type of residential care that typically provide continual nursing care for elderly people. Residential care refers to long-term care given to either adults or children who stay in a residential setting rather than their own home. Individuals who benefit most from nursing homes are those who do not need to be in a hospital but cannot live independently or be cared for at home. While nursing homes are most typically associated with the elderly, younger adults with different physical or mental disabilities may also benefit from them. The services at nursing homes often vary depending on the type of nursing home but services often include: room and board, medication monitoring, assistance with personal care, around the clock emergency care, and social and recreational activities.

In the United States, there are primarily three different types of nursing homes, the facilities vary based on the level of care they provide. An intermediate care facility is designed for individuals who are disabled, elderly, or do not have acute conditions. These facilities provide less intensive care than what would be available at a skilled nursing facility or a hospital. Another name for these types of facilities is residential care homes, they can range in size from large modern facilities to smaller residential homes. Most intermediate care facilities are highly regulated to guarantee that the best possible service is being provided. They are typically employed by nurses, doctors, and other medical professionals. These types of facilities typically offer individuals 24-hour assistance.

Assisted living facilities are tailored for individuals with disabilities. For the most part these residences offer aid with activities of daily living (ADLs). ADLs refer to people's daily

self-care activities and include things such as bathing, grooming, and feeding ourselves. Assisted living facilities offer people who do not require 24-hour assistance but still need some level of care an alternative. The final type of nursing home in the United States is a skilled nursing facility. This type of nursing home is certified to participate and be reimbursed by Medicare, a program for people who are aged 65 and over who contributed to Medicare while they were employed. Congress established minimum guidelines for nursing homes that want to provide services under Medicare, which are outlined under the Social Security Act.

In 2014, there were an estimated 15,640 nursing homes in the United States. Older adults account for the largest proportion of nursing home residents, individuals between the ages of 85 to 94 accounted for the largest majority. Women inhabit nursing homes at higher rates than men. Around 11.2 percent of women over 85 inhabit nursing homes compared to 6.1 percent of men in the same age group (Nursing homes in the U.S. - Statistics & Facts, n.d.). The most common medical issues reported in individuals in nursing homes are depression, weight loss, and bladder and bowel incontinence. Further, around 36.6 percent of all nursing home residents in 2014 had severe cognitive impairment (Nursing homes in the U.S. - Statistics & Facts, n.d.).

The staff at a nursing home is typically comprised of nurses, nursing assistants, administrators, housekeeping, and recreational staff. Nurses manage healthcare plans and oversee licensed practical nurses and nursing assistants. Nursing assistants usually help residents with their ADLs. Administrators are responsible for monitoring staff, providing medical supplies and overseeing financial matters. Housekeepers play an integral part in making sure that nursing homes are running effectively by keeping them clean and sanitary. Recreational staff provide residents with activities to keep them engaged and active, which is a benefit to their physical and mental health.

Despite their many benefits, there are many issues with nursing homes. Many individuals have outlined common issues plaguing the nursing home setting. Eric Carlson submitted a publication outlining several common problems within nursing homes and how to resolve them. He discusses financial issues such as discrimination against Medicaid beneficiaries and medical practice issues such as continuation of therapy when a resident is not progressing (Twenty Common Nursing Home Problems —and How to Resolve Them , 2006). The process for admitting an individual into a nursing home can be extensive and costly. Therefore, when considering nursing homes it is important to take into account who they are best suited for and what types of benefits they offer. The level of need an individual requires should be considered. Finally, being aware of the issues within nursing homes is also critically important as these homes vary widely in the quality of care that they provide..

Further Reading

Nursing homes in the U.S. – Statistics and Facts. (n.d.) In *Statista*. Retrieved February 27, 2018, from <https://www.statista.com/topics/3982/nursing-homes-in-the-us/>

Twenty Common Nursing Home Problems —and How to Resolve Them (2005) In *Commonwealthfund*. Retrieved February 27, 2018, from <http://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/tools/2006/jan/twenty-common-nursing-home-problems--and-how-to-resolve-them>