

Places

Hospitals. Hospitals are licensed by each state. Hospitals that accept Medicare payments must be accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO). There are different types of hospitals. Teaching hospitals are associated with health care professional education programs in colleges and universities. They also may be home to the latest medical research. One in five hospitals is a teaching hospital. They also typically have the latest in equipment and procedures. 90% of all teaching hospitals are located in urban areas. Most hospitals are “general” hospitals and care for a range of medical conditions. “Specialty” hospitals focus on one or more specific diseases or populations.

Long-Term Care Community. Sometimes referred to as a “nursing home” or “skilled nursing care facility,” a long-term care community place of residence for people who require constant nursing care and have significant deficiencies with daily living activities such as bathing, dressing, or grooming. Skilled nursing care is partially covered by Medicare reimbursement. Skilled nursing care under Medicare is meant for “short-stay” residents – those who may require rehabilitation services after joint replacement or other surgeries.

Assisted Living Community. Assisted living facilities are for people needing assistance with daily living activities, but wishing to live as independently as possible for as long as possible. Assisted living exists to bridge the gap between independent living and nursing homes. Nursing care may be provided at additional costs to residents depending on their needs. Some assisted living communities also provide dementia-care specialty areas.

Independent Living Community. Independent living is for people who want to and are able to live independently but do not want to maintain a home. Many people prefer to live in a community with others of the same age and with similar interests. An independent retirement community allows for a great deal of social activities and trips. Many independent living facilities also offer prepared meals and provide a wide range of amenities. Some communities have a “wellness center” staffed by a nurse who may be consulted for minor health concerns.

Continuing Care Retirement Community. Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRCs) combine all three levels of care – independent, assisted, and long-term. The resident can take advantage of the full range of services available and the ease of transfer to a different type of facility as his or her condition and needs change without needing to look for a new facility, relocate, or adapt to a new setting. Many older adults select a CCRC because of the convenience of onsite health care as well as the option to move from one care level to other. For example, the resident may begin in the independent living residences, move to assisted living as he or she needs help with activities of daily living, and eventually move to the nursing home as ongoing care becomes necessary.



Place Resources

How do I find out if a hospital is JCAHO accredited? Visit the JCAHO website at www.jcaho.org and check under the heading “Quality Check.”

How do I compare hospitals in terms of performance measures? Because only 1% of hospitals “fail” JCAHO accreditation, you want to use some other benchmarks to evaluate care performance. Two resources are:

- Medicare.gov’s Hospital Compare website - www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov
- HealthGrade (independent health care rating organization) - www.healthgrades.com

How do I compare nursing homes in terms of performance measures? Visit the Nursing Home Compare website at <http://www.medicare.gov/NHCompare/>

Where can I learn more about assisted living? Visit the nonprofit resource at www.helpguide.org for information about what is offered in assisted living (search Assisted Living), how to choose a community, and approximate costs.

Where can I learn more about CCRCs? Visit the nonprofit resource at www.helpguide.org for information about CCRCs (search CCRC), how they compare to other types of senior living options, what to look for in choosing a CCRC, and approximate costs.