

# Using the Web for Nursing Home Information

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In the past I have written extensively about the measures that are needed to make an intelligent choice regarding a nursing home for a loved one. To search for a nursing home or assisted living facility in New Jersey you can visit the following website ([www.state.nj.us/health/ltc/hcfa/](http://www.state.nj.us/health/ltc/hcfa/)) run by the Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) of New Jersey, which provides a report on the various facilities in the state.

Those facilities that participate in the Medicaid and Medicare program are evaluated and a report is posted. The DHSS provides an unannounced visit to the nursing home and surveys the facility. Various health care professionals conduct the survey and identify

areas that may be deficient in practice. This website is in user-friendly language and is

provided to educate the consumer. The purpose is to help consumers “shop” for a nursing home. The lists are updated monthly.

Another useful site is [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) that provides information on nursing homes throughout the country. On the left side of the webpage, click on search tools, then on compare nursing homes. You are then asked to search by geographical data, proximity, or by a specific facility’s name. It then can produce a list that will give you basic information; date of last inspection, total number of beds, total number of residents, percentage of occupied beds, Medicare participation, Medicaid participation, type of ownership, whether located in a hospital or part of a chain, and type of councils (resident, family, or both).

You will also have access to the last inspection report, presented in a manner that will allow you to understand how facilities are organized. Of

particular interest however, is a feature that allows you to see the proportion of residents with

a particular condition in each nursing home. The database allows you to choose among any or all of the following:

1. Residents who are very dependent in eating
2. Residents who are bedfast
3. Residents with restricted joint motion
4. Residents with restraints
5. Residents with pressure (bed) sores
6. Residents with urinary incontinence
7. Residents with unplanned weight gain or loss
8. Residents with behavioral symptoms

Of course, this kind of information is subject to misinterpretation. For instance, a high percentage of bedsores might be a result of referrals because of the facility’s expertise or might be as a result of poor quality care. Used properly it can give you timely information.

The importance of additional professional recommendations cannot be stressed enough. Only by being knowledgeable consumers can we make the right choices for our loved ones.