

# 3 Tips for Safeguarding Your Loved One in a Nursing Home

By Nancy Valko, RN, July 22, 2018

I have had many relatives and friends who lived in nursing homes and, especially as a nurse, I am always saddened by how few of the other residents had any visitors, even family members. I have even heard relatives say they would just prefer to remember their relative “the way they **were.**”

This is not only tragic for the family member’s or friend’s psychological well-being but also potentially for their safety. [Nursing home residents without visitors are at greater risk of neglect or even abuse.](#) With sometimes inadequate staffing and/or high nurse and aide turnover, it is important that people in a nursing home have someone who knows them to look out for them.

Here are 3 tips that can help safeguard a friend or relative:

1. Get to know the staff and tell them about your friend or relative, especially their likes or dislikes. Visit at different times or days in order to know the staff and when it is most convenient to talk with them.
2. Notice “red flags” like poor personal hygiene, unexplained injuries, weight loss, emotional changes, environmental hazards, etc. and know who to contact if you see a problem.
3. Especially if you have health care power of attorney for your relative or friend, ask about care conferences so that you can attend them. Such conferences usually cover how the resident is doing in terms of activity, possible pain, eating, mobility, etc. It is also crucial to know what medications have been ordered and given, especially the PRN (as needed) ones. For example, you may notice a change such as sleepiness or fatigue that can be helped with a medication change.

## CONCLUSION

By 2020, it is projected that [the global population of human beings who are 65 and older will surpass those under 5 for the first time in human history.](#) At the same time, families now have fewer children, older adults are more likely to have never married or are divorced and adult children often live far from their parents. This makes it harder for many older people to live independently in their own homes indefinitely without help.

According to the [CDC](#), 1.4 million people are nursing home residents in the US and, as I wrote in last week’s blog [“‘Rational’ Suicide and the ‘Elderly’”](#), those residents really benefit from visitors as do all of us who volunteer to help the elderly!