The Resident Advocate - a newsletter for residents of long-term care facilities containing news and information on rights and care issues, plus updates on national policy.

Know Your Medications

While medicine is important for healthcare, in some cases it can cause more harm than good. Antipsychotic drugs affect the brain and influence thinking, feeling, and reacting. Used correctly, these drugs treat symptoms of psychosis, which can include hallucinations and delusions, and can enhance quality of life. The improper use of antipsychotic medications can lead to harmful side effects like pain, confusion, falls, and an increased chance of stroke, especially in those with dementia. In some cases, antipsychotic drugs are given when residents show signs of distress in place of good care, this is known as a chemical restraint. Federal nursing home laws prohibit the use of chemical restraints and unnecessary drugs. The law also requires that nursing homes provide quality care, so individuals reach or maintain their highest level of well-being.

It’s a good idea to know about the medications you’re taking. Ask your doctor or the nurse in charge why you are taking each drug, what the potential side effects are, and if there are any other options. You can also request a care plan meeting to talk about better or different care strategies. Caregivers should first work to identify and treat underlying problems, such as pain, dehydration, infection, or fear, that can cause agitation, confusion, or other changes.

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman program advocates for and with residents. Contact the program if you have concerns about your care and need help. Find your Ombudsman at https://theconsumervoice.org/get_help.

It’s Your Right: Participate in Your Plan of Care

Care plans are the blueprint for the care and services you are to receive. Your care plan is unique to you and tells how your care needs and goals will be met. You have the right to quality care. In a care planning meeting, you and the staff talk about life in the facility—meals, activities, therapies, personal schedule, medical and nursing care, and emotional needs. You can bring up problems, ask questions, or offer information to help staff provide care. You have the right to participate in the development of your care plan. This plan can include strategies for both medical and non-medical needs and goals.

Before your meeting, it is good to be prepared. Think about the things you want to be included in your care plan. Speak up at the meeting and make sure to ask questions if there is something you don’t understand. Before your plan is completed, read it over, make sure everything you want is stated in the plan. When your plan has been created, ask for a copy. If your plan is not being followed, or if the plan is not working for you, don’t be afraid to speak up. Ask staff to go over your care plan and make any changes, if needed.
Celebrate Residents’ Rights Month with these Activity Ideas!

- **Do it Yourself Door Hangers** - Visit the Consumer Voice website and print a black and white “I Stand for Quality” door hanger template to decorate as you wish.

- **Pets Day** - Work with your local animal shelter, local companion pet service, or have family members bring in pets to have some quality time for residents and staff with furry friends!

- **Residents' Rights Posters** - Clip images & words from magazines or express yourself artistically to create posters about what residents' rights mean to you.


For more information, visit www.theconsumervoice.org
Phone: 202-332-2275
Email: info@theconsumervoice.org