

Assistant in Nursing interview questions

careertips.com.au: common questions and what they're really testing

What to expect

Interviews for Assistant in Nursing roles tend to be practical and values-focused. Employers want to know you can provide safe personal care, communicate clearly and work as part of a nursing team. They will also check your understanding of manual handling and infection control.

- **Process and technical:** Questions about how you perform tasks like transferring a patient, taking vital signs or following infection control.
- **Behavioural:** Questions asking for examples of how you have worked with others, handled a difficult situation or shown empathy.
- **Scenario and judgement:** Questions about what you would do in specific situations, such as a patient refusing care or a change in condition.
- **Safety and compliance:** Questions about manual handling, incident reporting, WHS and your understanding of care standards.
- **Availability and motivation:** Questions about shift work, weekends, nights and why you want to work in this setting.

A typical interview starts with a phone screen from a recruiter or care manager, then a face-to-face or online interview with a clinical nurse or facility manager. Some aged care providers include a group interview or a short practical skills check, such as demonstrating a manual handling technique. You will usually be asked to provide references, a police check and evidence of your qualifications before an offer is made.

1. Can you walk me through how you would safely transfer a patient from bed to chair using a hoist?

Why they ask

This tests your manual handling knowledge and safety awareness, which are core to the role.

How to structure your answer

Use a step-by-step walk-through: check the care plan, explain the procedure to the patient, ensure the hoist is safe and the sling is correct, use a two-person assist if needed, communicate throughout, and document the transfer.

Example answer

"First, I check the patient's care plan to see what hoist and sling are recommended and whether a two-person assist is required. I explain to the patient what I am going to do and make sure they are comfortable. I check the hoist is charged and the sling is in good condition, then position the sling correctly under the patient. I lower the bed to a safe height, apply the brakes, and attach the sling to the hoist. My colleague and I lift the patient smoothly, keeping them calm and telling them each step. We lower them into the chair, remove the sling, and make sure they are comfortable and have the call bell. I document the transfer and report any changes to the nurse."

2. Tell me about a time you dealt with an upset or anxious patient. How did you handle it?

Why they ask

This behavioural question explores your empathy, communication and ability to de-escalate.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: describe the Situation, the Task, the Action you took and the Result. Focus on listening, reassurance, and involving the nurse if needed.

Example answer

"I was caring for a resident with dementia who became very anxious during showering and started calling out for her daughter. I stayed calm, lowered my voice, and told her she was safe. I explained what I was doing step by step and gave her a warm towel to hold. I asked if she would like to sit for a moment, and we took a short break. I informed the registered nurse, who came and reassured her. The resident settled and we finished the shower with no distress. I learned that slowing down and giving simple choices can make a big difference."

3. You notice a patient's vital signs have changed and they seem more confused than usual. What do you do?

Why they ask

This scenario tests your clinical judgement, escalation skills and understanding of your scope of practice.

How to structure your answer

Describe how you would assess the situation, record observations, escalate promptly to the registered nurse, and follow up. Emphasise knowing your scope of practice.

Example answer

"I would stay with the patient, reassure them and check their vital signs again using the blood pressure monitor and thermometer. If their blood pressure had dropped or their temperature spiked, I would record the readings and the change in confusion. I would report immediately to the registered nurse in charge, giving them the exact numbers and what I observed. I would not make a clinical judgement myself; I would follow the nurse's instructions, whether that means helping with a fluid balance chart or keeping the patient safe. I would document everything in the progress notes and continue to monitor as directed."

4. How do you ensure infection control during personal care?

Why they ask

This technical question checks your knowledge of standard precautions and hygiene practices.

How to structure your answer

Walk through standard precautions: hand hygiene before and after, PPE, safe waste disposal, cleaning equipment. Show you know the why as well as the what.

Example answer

"Before I start, I perform hand hygiene and gather the right PPE, like gloves and an apron. I follow the five moments of hand hygiene, especially before touching the patient and after removing gloves. I use standard precautions for all patients, not just those with known infections. I dispose of waste in the correct bins, clean the hoist or shower chair after use, and make sure linen goes in the right bag. If I notice any sign of infection, like a red area or unusual smell, I report it to the nurse. Keeping the patient safe from infection is part of every task."

5. Describe a time you worked as part of a team to manage a busy shift.

Why they ask

This behavioural question assesses teamwork, communication and your ability to prioritise under pressure.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR again, but focus on communication, prioritisation and supporting colleagues. Show you can ask for help and offer it.

Example answer

"On a busy morning in aged care, two staff members called in sick and we were short. I could see the registered nurse was stretched. I checked with her about which residents needed care first and offered to take on extra showers for the more independent residents. I also helped a new casual staff member find supplies and showed her where the hoists were kept. We worked together to make sure everyone got their breakfast and medication on time. By the end of the shift, all care was done and the nurse thanked me for stepping up. I learned that speaking up and helping each other keeps everyone safe."

6. Why do you want to work as an Assistant in Nursing in aged care?

Why they ask

This motivation question helps the employer understand your values and whether you are likely to stay in the role.

How to structure your answer

Give a personal answer that connects your values to the role. Talk about what you find rewarding, your interest in older people, and your commitment to dignity. Avoid cliches.

Example answer

"I want to work in aged care because I believe older people deserve to be treated with dignity and kindness at every stage. I enjoy building relationships with residents and their families, and I find it rewarding to help someone start their day feeling comfortable and respected. I also like the teamwork in aged care and the chance to learn from registered nurses. I know the work can be physically and emotionally demanding, but I am committed to providing consistent, compassionate care. That is why I completed my Certificate III and why I want to keep working in this area."