

Tips for holiday trips with seniors

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(HealthDay)—If you plan to travel with an elderly relative this holiday season, don't leave things to chance, an expert on geriatric medicine says.

"Simply traveling long-distance to visit relatives can become increasingly stressful as individuals age," said Dr. Angela Catic, an assistant professor at Baylor College of Medicine's Center on Aging in Houston.

While traveling, make sure older [family members](#) have their medications and assistive devices readily available. And watch for signs of fatigue, difficulty walking, or being too warm or cool, Catic advised.

"Elders with dementia are particularly vulnerable during the [holiday season](#)," Catic said in a college news release. "As dementia progresses, change in routine can be very difficult and may result in increased confusion and behavioral issues."

Her suggestions: Maintain seniors' routines as much as possible; limit their exposure to noisy or lively gatherings; keep gifts and meals simple; and ensure there's plenty of time to rest.

On plane trips, seniors should walk in the aisles once every hour if they're able to, or pump their legs while sitting in their seat, Catic said. This helps reduce blood clot risk.

The holidays also provide an opportunity to visit and assess the health of elderly family members you might not see regularly. You can check for problems such as forgetfulness, and physical issues such as lack of balance or increased shortness of breath. Also, try to see if they're taking medications properly, she suggested.

Is your relative wearing soiled clothes or looking ungroomed? Is the home messier than normal? These changes could indicate mental decline or physical inability to maintain their home, Catic said.

Signs of anxiety and depression in seniors include social withdrawal, being more anxious or agitated than normal, and tearfulness. If you

notice these symptoms, encourage the person to get checked by a [health care provider](#).

You might also make the holidays more pleasant for seniors by helping with house cleaning, cooking meals for them, and helping with shopping.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers resources on [seniors' health](#).

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