

Caring for elderly loved ones during a holiday lockdown

December 24 2020



(HealthDay)—While everyone is dealing with the impact of the

COVID-19 pandemic, older adults may feel the loss of holiday traditions the most.

It is possible to make this season feel joyful, even with all the changes. It's also a good time to check on their health and boost their mood, even from afar.

"As much as you love the older adults in your life, now is not the time to gather with them, especially if you're not in their bubble," said Dr. Angela Catic, assistant professor at the Huffington Center on Aging at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston.

Consider instead what you can do to make this time easier for older adults in your life, such as having a [holiday](#) meal delivered or sending flowers. If they're tech savvy, you can check in with them virtually, enjoying a holiday meal via phone or [video conference](#). If they live nearby, do a window visit.

"You can really observe so much with window visits. See if the older adults are moving around, if they've lost weight and how the house looks," Catic said in a Baylor news release. "Families can even set up tables on each side of the window, turn on their phones and dine together."

Regularly communicate via phone, video or window, possibly setting up a calling tree among [family members](#) so older adults get several calls daily, which can help ease isolation and improve mood. Talk about the future to help them see the light ahead, she said.

Adults who are physically and mentally able to do so should spend time outside every day, walking in the neighborhood or sitting on the porch, Catic suggested.

"They may see people out and about, which is good for their spirits," she said. "Outdoors is safer than indoors, but they should still wear a mask."

You can also check in on their memory, thinking skills and [mental health](#) with these virtual or window visits, Catic suggested. Discuss [current events](#) or reminisce about past holidays to see if they can follow the conversation.

Catic also suggests encouraging older family members who haven't done so to get a flu shot at their doctor's office or nearby pharmacy.

"If there are red flags or if something seems off with an older [family](#) member, reach out to their medical providers about the best way to address this," Catic said. "Whether it's a virtual or face-to-face visit, hospitals and clinics have safety as their top priority. Maintaining the health of [older adults](#) is a priority and we are here and available to help."

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on coping during the [COVID-19 pandemic](#).

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Citation: Caring for elderly loved ones during a holiday lockdown (2020, December 24) retrieved 24 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-12-elderly-holiday-lockdown.html>

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