

Halloween can be a scary time for people with dementia. Here's how to help

October 27 2022, by Cara Murez



When there are suddenly creepy decorations and lots of knocks at the

door from strangers, Halloween can be frightening for someone living with [dementia](#).

It is possible to keep a loved one living with the disease calm and safe, while also including that [family](#) member in celebrating the holiday quietly, experts say.

"Like with many other traditions, there are adaptations families can make to help their relatives living with dementia have a safe and enjoyable Halloween," said Jennifer Reeder, director of educational and [social services](#) for the Alzheimer's Foundation of America.

"We encourage [caregivers](#) to follow a few quick and easy steps to keep the 'Happy' in 'Happy Halloween' on Oct. 31," Reeder said in a foundation news release.

The foundation's experts suggest adapting the celebration by reminiscing about past Halloween costumes or activities while looking at old family pictures. Watch a non-threatening program about Halloween.

Give your loved one healthy snacks, such as fruit. Too much [candy](#) can increase agitation.

For some, it may be possible to have a loved one with dementia help hand out candy to trick-or-treaters, but never leave the person alone to do so, which could be frightening, confusing and a safety risk, the foundation suggests.

Try playing calming music, engaging in a quiet activity such as reading a book together or providing soothing reassurance.

Minimize [distress](#) by avoiding potentially scary decorations, such as fake skeletons, cobwebs, witches and monsters. It's especially important to

avoid exposure to interactive decorations that talk or scream when someone passes by or that have flashing or flickering lights. These can scare and cause someone with [dementia](#) to [wander](#) away, even from their own home.

Stay safe with the lights on inside and outside the home, so burglars and vandals don't think the house is empty, the foundation suggests. Another option for candy is to leave a bowl outside the door with a sign that says, "Please take one."

The AFA Helpline at 866-232-8484 or via the website www.alzfdn.org offers an opportunity to speak with a licensed social worker seven days a week.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [dementia](#).

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Citation: Halloween can be a scary time for people with dementia. Here's how to help (2022, October 27) retrieved 4 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-10-halloween-scary-people-dementia.html>

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