

Tips for traveling with a loved one with Alzheimer's

May 23 2024, by Dennis Thompson



Experts are expecting this Memorial Day weekend to be the busiest yet,

with nearly 44 million Americans projected to travel between Thursday and Monday.

A fair number of those travelers will have a companion suffering from Alzheimer's disease or another dementia-related illness, according to the Alzheimer's Foundation of America (AFA).

"Taking a trip during Memorial Day Weekend can be a fun way to kick off the summer season for someone affected by dementia if caregivers make the proper preparations and adaptations," said Jennifer Reeder, the AFA's director of educational and social services.

"Whether traveling by car or mass transit, there are a few steps caregivers can follow to make traveling more comfortable, less stressful and more enjoyable for their loved ones and themselves," Reeder added in an AFA news release.

Some of these steps include:

Making sure travel is advisable at all. People early in dementia might still enjoy traveling, but those in the later stages might find it an overwhelming experience. Check with their doctor to make sure they are okay to travel the distance you've planned for your trip.

Plan around the person's abilities and routine. Small or unfamiliar changes can sometimes be too much for a person with dementia. Choose a mode of travel and a schedule that causes the least amount of anxiety and stress by taking into account the person's abilities and needs. For example, they might travel more easily at a specific time of day, or normally eat around a certain time.

Don't overschedule. Overstimulation can cause someone with dementia confusion, agitation or anxiety. Be sure to build in down time to allow

the person to rest and recharge. Focus on quality time together, rather than trying to cram in a bunch of sites, attractions and activities.

Pack wisely. Bring snacks, water, fun activities like puzzles and comfort items like a blanket or the person's favorite sweater. Remember an extra set of comfortable clothes, in case you travel somewhere warmer or colder than your home territory. Take important health documentation, a medication list and physician information for your loved one.

Build in break time. Regular breaks on road trips for food, bathroom visits and rest can help the person better enjoy their time with you.

Understand security procedures. Check in advance about an airport's or train station's security screening procedures, and let the person with dementia know what to expect. This can reduce their anxiety. Also, the Transportation Security Administration offers screening assistance to air travelers with [dementia](#)-related illnesses; contact the TSA Cares Helpline at least 72 hours prior to your flight to learn more.

Advise the airline. Let your airline know you're traveling with someone who has memory impairment. Tell them about any safety concerns or special needs regarding your loved one.

More information: The AARP has [tips for traveling](#) with a loved one who has dementia.

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