

Summer Vacations & Dementia

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During the next couple of months, families hit the road for memorable vacations to experience a new place or visit an old favorite. As a caregiver of a person living with dementia, you may find that these vacations may be a little more difficult for you and your loved one to enjoy than they used to be. Here are a couple of things to keep in mind when planning your next getaway!

Plan with your loved one in mind

If your loved one is living with a progressive dementia, such as Alzheimer's disease, traveling may be easier for them to do if they are in the earlier stages of the disease. However, as the disease progresses, traveling may be too overwhelming, and your loved one's overall health and well-being may suffer. It is important to consider the benefits and challenges of a trip, and plan whatever is easiest and comfortable for your loved one. Shorter, local trips may become easier than a cross-country vacation. Consider also planning trips to familiar places, or to visit family or friends who would be able to help out with caring for your loved one.

Try to stick to the same old routine

Routine is very important for a person living with dementia, especially during travel. Try to stick with similar times for sleep, mealtimes, etc. Planning things around when your loved one is at their best can also help.

Have a backup plan

As in any vacation, things do not always go as planned. Have a backup plan for activities, and remember to just enjoy being with your loved one. Although your loved one may be able to enjoy an outing for a shorter amount of time before, or only a portion of an activity, the important take-away is that they are involved and enjoying themselves.

Consider a safety plan

Traveling with medical documents in case you and your loved one would need to go to the ER or hospital is a must. Bring copies of legal documents (Powers of Attorney, living wills), information about medication or treatment, insurance information, and emergency contacts.

Consider purchasing a medical bracelet that would have contact information for you in case your loved one would become disoriented, get lost, or wander. This can be especially helpful in large crowds such as an airport or large event.

You need a break too

Be sure to enlist help from family, friends, or professional caregivers. Tell them what you need and practical things they can help with. Traveling can be stressful in a regular situation, and adding the layer of caring for a person living with dementia can be overwhelming. Plan plenty of rest and relaxation time for you. And most importantly, enjoy!

For more information about Memory Moment & Effingham Area Alzheimer's Awareness, check out their website at www.effinghamalz.org. If you are a caregiver and have specific questions or situations you would like information on, please feel free to call Shannon Nosbisch at 217-663-0010 or Amy Sobrino at 618-363-8372.