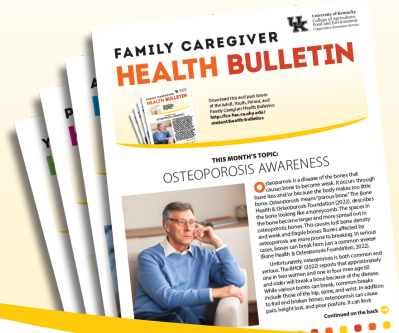


FAMILY CAREGIVER HEALTH BULLETIN



JULY 2025

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC

TRAVELING WITH DEMENTIA



People like to travel because it's a form of recreation, relaxation, and education. Travel also brings family and friends together. While travel can be a positive experience, it can also come with stress, especially if it includes traveling with a loved one living with dementia. It is common for someone living with cognitive impairment to react poorly to changes in routine or unfamiliar places and faces. But caregivers and families may want or need to travel with a loved one living with dementia. The Alzheimer's Association and online Family Caregiver Service provide tips to help caregivers create a safe, comfortable, and enjoyable experience.

- **Plan ahead.** Make reservations to reduce unknown and added stress. Advise hotels, airlines, tour operators, and others involved with the trip that you are traveling with

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Maintain a consistent and familiar daily routine while away. This might include keeping meal and sleep routines to the same schedule as at home.

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someone with cognitive impairment. Be honest about your concerns and their needs.

- **Keep it simple.** Expect your loved one to become increasingly confused while out of their daily routine. Until you know how they handle travel, minimize the time away to a day trip or weekend. Do not overschedule. Include downtime in the itinerary.
- **Make it familiar.** Try vacationing in ways your loved one traveled before the dementia onset. Maintain a consistent and familiar daily routine while away. This might include keeping meal and sleep routines to the same schedule as at home.
- **Avoid triggers.** Know what causes agitation and anxiety and try to avoid those triggers. For example, if a person does better during the day, then travel or tour during the day versus in the late evening or night. When or if agitation occurs, have identified strategies to reduce stress.
- **Build in rest time.** Less is more. Do not overschedule.
- **Find locations with health-care facilities nearby.** In case of emergency, it is helpful to be close to emergency medical facilities and pharmacies.
- **Communicate.** Talk about the plan with your loved one. Keep information to a minimum to prevent them from becoming overwhelmed in the details. Communicate the plan with other family members and give them copies of your detailed itinerary, including contact information.
- **Keep it calm.** Crowds, loud noise, and activity can be overwhelming and tiring. Even eating out can increase anxiety. Do not overschedule. Do not plan too many daily activities. Avoid crowds as much as possible. Minimize multiple stops while traveling to and from your destination.
- **Create safety measures.** If your loved one wanders, try to get ahead of the behavior by knowing what drives it. Take preventative measures like arranging for constant supervision, installing door alarms and alert services, placing

emergency contact information in pockets or on necklaces, dressing the person in bright clothes so they can be seen in the distance. Consider using a tracking device to help identify a location.

- **Pack a grab and go bag.** In a small bag that you can carry and have with you at all times, include emergency essentials. Pack a change of clothes, snacks, water, activities, medications, mobility aides and any other medical or assistive devices. Include photocopies of emergency contacts, health-care provider names and numbers, a list of current medications and dosages, and other important legal documents such as the medical power of attorney, living will, and advanced directive.
- **Create a back-up plan and a back-up plan to your back-up plan.** The entire trip or parts of it may have to change for a variety of reasons.
- **Buy travel insurance.** Things change.
- **Be flexible and realistic.** Allow extra time and consider a person's abilities and limitations. Remember, things can change quickly.

Traveling with a loved one with dementia can be a positive opportunity for both you as a caregiver and the person living with impairment. Travel provides social interaction and cognitive stimulation. Travel also contributes to a sense of purpose and personal growth. In addition to these travel tips, it can also be helpful to talk to a health-care provider or someone from your local Alzheimer's Association to further enhance the success of your trip.

REFERENCES:

- Alzheimer's Association. (2025) Traveling. Retrieved 5/20/25 from <https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/safety/traveling>
- Family Caregivers Online. (2024). Planning a Trip? Considerations for Dementia Caregivers Retrieved 5/20/25 from <https://familycaregiversonline.net/traveling-with-dementia>

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