

# Tips for Traveling with a Loved One with Dementia



## Planning ahead

- Have a bag of essentials with you at all times that includes medications, travel itinerary, a comfortable change of clothes, water, snacks and activities.
- Pack necessary medications, up-to-date medical information, a list of emergency contacts and photocopies of important legal documents.
- Create an itinerary that includes details about each destination. Give copies to emergency contacts at home. Keep a copy of your itinerary with you at all times.
- If you will be staying in a hotel, inform the staff ahead of time of your specific needs so they can be prepared to assist you.
- Travel during the time of day that is best for the person with dementia.

## When does it make more sense to stay home?

Traveling is usually a lot easier when the person is in the earlier stages of dementia. Here are some useful tips to help you decide if staying at home makes more sense.

## Does the person

- become anxious or agitated in new environments or around new people?
- constantly ask to go home even during short visits or trips?
- act verbally or physically abusive?
- have a problem with continence?
- wander?
- have great difficulty walking or have a risk of falling?
- need help with things like dressing, going to the bathroom, bathing, eating?
- have other serious medical issues and/or need a physician's ok to travel?

## Travel tips

- If the trip is a go and it's going to be a long ride in the car, consider taking some short trips ahead of time to troubleshoot potential problems.
- Honor the person's usual schedule and stick to it as much as possible. Routine is critical, so if it is disrupted, expect there to be some agitation or increased confusion.
- Bring along familiar items, especially things that are soothing for the person: soft comfort items, special activities, books, pictures or favorite scented lotions. Be sure clothing is comfortable.
- Always allow for extra time.
- People with dementia often have better times of the day; try to schedule activities (driving, for instance) during those better times when the person is rested, fed and comfortable.
- Don't try to pack too much into one day. It may make more sense to break up a long drive with an overnight stay along the way. Rest can be critical (for both of you).
- Make sure the person is carrying or wearing some form of identification that includes your cell phone number. Kate Fallon, a licensed clinical professional counselor at Ageless Journeys, says a Safe Return bracelet is a great option.
- Take a photograph of your loved one so you'll know what clothes he/she is wearing ... just in case. In fact, take pictures along the way so you can document your trip and enjoy looking at them later.
- Carry all important documents yourself — tickets, passports, etc.
- In the airport, use family or handicapped restrooms if you're concerned about your person using it alone and be cautious about letting him/her wait outside when you're using the restroom.
- On the plane, try to get a seat close to the restroom.
- If you have special needs, let the airline know. Consider letting the flight attendants know you are traveling with someone who has dementia.
- Carry as few bags as possible or have them checked straight through.
- Breathe
- Smile even if you don't feel like it. It's amazing how quickly a smile can turn things around

<https://advantagehomecaremaine.com/tips-for-traveling-with-a-loved-one-with-dementia/>

**\*Bring an Ipad with your loved one's favorite music\***

