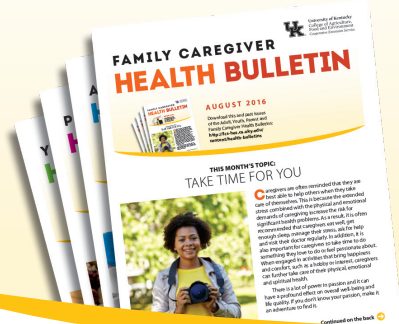




FAMILY CAREGIVER

HEALTH BULLETIN



DECEMBER 2018

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE: PREPARING FOR THE HOLIDAYS



The holidays are often about being thankful, celebrating and getting together with family and friends. But this time of year can also be a challenge for caregivers of those living with Alzheimer's Disease because of emotional stress and added expectations caregivers place on themselves to make the season a good experience. In order to make the holidays positive, happy and memorable, caregivers must plan and adjust expectations. The following tips are from the Alzheimer's Association of Texas.

Preparing the person with Alzheimer's Disease

- Talk about and show photos of the people who are coming to visit.

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Have a quiet room if things get too hectic and have a familiar person stay with them so they don't feel isolated or left out.

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- Play familiar holiday music and serve favorite holiday foods.
- Watch and/or help with decorations.
- Persons with AD may recognize faces of family members and friends, but can't recall their names — name tags might be helpful.
- Have a quiet room if things get too hectic and have a familiar person stay with them so they don't feel isolated or left out.
- Prepare for distractions beforehand (i.e. use of a photo album) to divert attention if problem behaviors occur.

Preparing visitors

- Delegate tasks to family members to make your day easier.
- Encourage them to visit, but to call ahead and arrange a good time.
- Have visitors come during the part of the day you know your loved one is at his/her best.
- Familiarize visitors with behavior and condition changes of your loved one with AD, so they will not be shocked by the appearance or behavior of the person.
- Explain why you are limiting the length of the visit and the number of visitors.
- Watch for signs of fatigue and alert the family when it is time for them to leave.

Selecting activities

- Manage your expectations by not taking on too much and choosing a few activities that are the most important to you and your loved one.
- Use past interests as a guide. When the activity is first introduced, if there is no interest, try again later.
- Slow the pace of the activity to allow the person with AD to comprehend as well as enjoy the sensory pleasure from the activity.
- Some activity suggestions (based on ability to succeed and for satisfaction and safety) are to make ornaments; decorate a tree; decorate cookies; package baked goods; polish silver or the menorah; set the table; wrap boxes;

seal or stamp holiday cards; sing or listen to songs; enjoy photos, videos or slides of family and past holidays; stories; or walks.

Preparing your home

- Music and movies bring back your most cherished memories of the holidays, however, music that is too loud or vigorous might be unsettling to your loved one.
- People with Alzheimer's might become disoriented by blinking lights and by decorations which substantially change a familiar environment, so keep it simple.

Maintaining safety

- Create a clear pathway for walking; avoid wires, cords or throw rugs.
- Use ribbon or yarn instead of sharp hooks to hang ornaments and decorations.
- Avoid decorating with items that look edible.
- Avoid confusing, blinking lights.
- Do not leave lighted candles or fireplace unattended.
- Use plastic or silk mistletoe rather than real ones; if eaten it is toxic.

Following these tips, caregivers are more likely to lessen stress and frustration, prepare family members, and help provide opportunities to seek better communication, connection and support.

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