

Let's Travel While We Can!

By: Pat Finkle, Client Support Coordinator



“Let’s travel while we can!” The sentiment of many who are faced with a diagnosis of dementia; a progressive condition. Creating new memories through travel can be very gratifying. While traveling with dementia can be challenging, there are things that you can do to limit risks.

Have a back-up plan. You are entering new territory when traveling with a diagnosis of dementia and need to enter without preconceived expectations. A back-up plan would include going home early. While traveling can be very enjoyable, it can also be very stressful. This is not a failure rather a testing of limitations. Keep in mind that there may come a time when traveling is too disorienting or stressful for both the family and the person living with dementia. A trip well planned can be very successful and rewarding.

The following are a few tips that can help plan a successful trip.



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- Go with the option that provides the most comfort and the least anxiety. e.g. a familiar place where you have traveled in the past
- Try to find a direct flight without stopovers
- Enroll in the Medic Alert Safely Home Program. Changes in the environment can leave you at risk to get lost.
<http://www.alzheimer.ca/en/Living-with-dementia/Day-to-day-living/Safety/Safely-Home?gclid=CI3u49bxnNQCFY61wAodnakC8w>
- Involve as few changes in daily routine as possible
- Prepare family, hotels, tour guides etc. with the information they need to ensure a great trip
- Inform the airline that you are a person living with dementia or supporting a person living with dementia and request an escort or guide (available at most airports for a small fee). They will move you through without lining up and simplify the airport experience.
- Consider a holiday package where everything is organized
- Don't plan too many activities, which can cause exhaustion and lead to disorientation – rest is needed
- Carry recent photos, medications list, itinerary, a list of emergency contacts and photo copies of important legal documents
- Carry a change of clothes, a snack and fluids
- Travel during the time of day that is when you are both at your best
- Have a laid back schedule that gives lots of time so that you never have to be rushed

Implementing these tips can help to ensure an enjoyable trip. Clients in our Changes Support Group who have dementia often talk about their recent travels as a highlight. Focusing on things that they can still do is a very positive way of adding meaning to a person's day to



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day experience. For the family travel can create meaningful memories to enjoy as the person living with dementia is changing.

A client of the Alzheimer Society who has traveled to Greece recently with his wife had this to say...

“Finding the right travel professionals who guide you through and work with seniors and people with special needs is the key to a successful trip. I have a diagnosis of dementia, a hearing impairment and am legally blind. Traveling can be challenging, but can be very rewarding. I will travel as long as I can. How long that will be I’m not sure! Sometimes when people are diagnosed with dementia, they feel it’s the end of the world. This is not the end of my world, I can still do so many things and one of those things is travel.” Bob Eley



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