

Société Alzheimer Society

Tips caregivers can share to make a holiday gathering special



The holidays are all about spending time with friends and family. Including a person with dementia in these events is important because it helps them connect, through familiar faces and objects, to their past. And create new memories too.

Including people with dementia in a social gathering, especially a large one, can be challenging. The extra stimulation may be difficult to manage.

Most people with dementia still enjoy socializing. Sometimes it is friends and family that may feel uncertain in these situations, or not know what to say or how to act.

To help ensure a fun family gathering, here are some tips to help both people with dementia and their families and friends:

1. A nap in the afternoon can help some feel more rested for the gathering.
2. Invite the person you are caring for to chip in: get her to help [prepare the meal](#) with simple tasks, like peeling potatoes.
3. Do limit the number of guests to around ten so neither of you are overwhelmed by this new situation.
4. Limit loud music as it's distracting – get the kids to wear their headphones!
5. Make sure everyone sits at the table. You can enjoy the fruit of your labours, and the person with dementia will also feel part of the group.
6. Encourage family not to be shy. One-on-one chats will be appreciated by all.
7. Ahead of time, share tips with the family to help minimize concerns and improve communication. Smiling and using humour are always delightful.
8. Be aware! If the person with dementia appears restless or irritated, take her away from the party for a break.
9. Kitchen parties are the best! Ask for her help with cleaning up after the meal.
10. As the evening winds down, consider an [activity better suited for someone with dementia](#), like looking through old family photos, which can stimulate reminiscence.

For practical advice and support this holiday season, contact your [local Alzheimer Society](#).
For crisis situations at night or on the weekend, call Telehealth Ontario (1-866-797-0000).