



Going on holiday

Many people with Dementia enjoy spending holidays with friends and relatives. It is important to plan breaks carefully to ensure that everyone has as good a time as possible.

Some possible difficulties

Going on holiday together can be enjoyable for people who have dementia and carers. It provides a break from routine and new experiences to share. However, difficulties may arise. People with dementia sometimes find a new environment confusing or they may take some time to settle down once they return home.

The carer may be so concerned about giving the person with dementia a good holiday that they do not have a chance to relax themselves. It is therefore important to think through the kind of holiday that would suit you both. Talk over any problems that might arise. You can't foresee everything, but many potential problems can be minimized with careful preparation and planning.

Try to be open with others about your needs and explain potential difficulties or limitations so they know what to expect. Trying to hide problems can make life more stressful for everyone.

Staying with people you know

If you are staying with friends or relatives, or going away with them, discuss the situation and suggest how they might be able to help. For example, you might explain that the person with Dementia prefers one-to-one company and that they dislike being pressed to do too much. Or you could ask them to spend some time with the person during the morning or afternoon so that you can take a break.

People are usually much more willing to offer support or share responsibilities once they are clear about just how they can help.

Making other arrangements

If you know you can manage on your own, you may choose to stay in a hotel or bed and breakfast. If this is the case, speak to the owner or manager before you book to check that it is the right place for you. You need to be sure there will be a friendly, welcoming atmosphere and that staff will understand if any difficulties occur. It may be a good idea to book out of season when everyone is less rushed and can give you more time and attention.

Try to find out as much as you can beforehand about the place you intend to visit. Are there interesting places to see, activities you can both enjoy and pleasant places to relax? If either of you has a physical disability, will it be possible for you to get around? Local tourist offices can provide useful information.

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Someone with Dementia who is independent in familiar surroundings may need support when coping with an unfamiliar environment or changed routine. The holiday may be more enjoyable if a friend or relative comes with you.

Travel

A holiday where you are constantly moving around will probably be very tiring for you both. It is also probably less suited to most people than one based in one place, where there is a chance to get used to new surroundings. This doesn't preclude outings, but try to keep life as relaxed and leisurely as you would at home.

Travel to and from your destination can also be tiring. Check out the arrangements well beforehand. If you are driving, take plenty of breaks. If you are traveling by other means, check that transport to and from where you are staying has been arranged.

If you do have to fly long distance, or spend a great deal of time travelling, a person with Dementia will probably feel disoriented by the effects of the journey. Jet lag and a new environment can also increase confusion, and this can take a few days to settle down.

All airlines need to be informed about passengers' special needs. Depending on the extent of the condition, some airlines might not let a person fly if there is a possibility they may become distressed while in the air. If an airline is concerned about someone traveling by plane, they may request a doctor's report.

Insurance

Make sure you have adequate holiday insurance cover if you need it. If a person has been diagnosed with Dementia and wants to take out holiday insurance, you must tell the insurance company about the diagnosis – otherwise the existing cover may not be valid.

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