

# Caregiver Assistance News

“CARING FOR YOU...CARING FOR OTHERS”

## Traveling with Alzheimer's Disease

### Special Occasions and Special Challenges

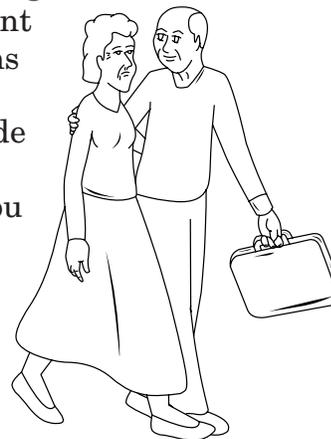
Caregivers often have trouble deciding whether it is possible or worthwhile to travel with the person who has Alzheimer's Disease (AD). It will require a lot of advance planning and knowledge of local resources. The person may function at a much lower level in unfamiliar surroundings than at home. Time changes, language, and strange people may cause distress.

You will be required to provide a great deal more support while traveling than you do at home. However, some trips are *essential*, while others may be for pleasure. You may choose to spend the extra energy to include the person in your care on the trip, and it *is* possible that both of you may enjoy many aspects of the experience.

People with dementia are very sensitive to the environment they live in. They are less able to handle changes. Being in a strange place may cause *agitation*. Even a positive event, such as a wedding, can feel overwhelming to a person with Alzheimer's disease and can lead to *agitation*. It is important to evaluate the person's *environment* to see if it is causing problems that may be adding to the agitation. Don't forget that what used to bother the person before he had AD, probably still will.

### Can You Be Flexible?

Can you be flexible and change the arrangements at the last minute? Even the best of plans may need to be changed, or canceled entirely, if symptoms of the illness interfere. The person with dementia may become too agitated, behave inappropriately, or be unable to get ready in time to go, perhaps making you miss the event as well. If it turns out that it is not possible to include the person with dementia, can you accept this as a result of the symptoms of the illness and not be angry?



### NOTE

People with dementia can be unpredictable. They do not do this on purpose. A plan that seems to make perfect sense may turn out poorly. And that doesn't mean that *you* made a mistake.

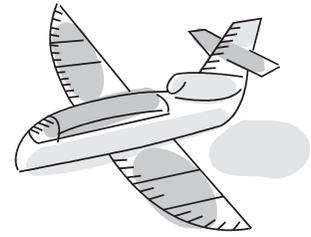
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on page 2

Continued from page 1

## 12 Tips for Navigating Airport Security

– Candy B. Harrington

Having Alzheimer's doesn't automatically rule out air travel; however advance planning is essential for a smoother trip. With that in mind, here are a few things to keep in mind, as you head through the airport security checkpoint.



1. **Arrive early** to allow plenty of extra time to get through security.
2. **Request a wheelchair** for the person in your care, even if they don't use one at home. Not only will it prevent fatigue, but wheelchair-users are usually fast tracked through security.
3. Have the person in your care carry a **"traveling with" card** in their wallet, with your name and cell phone number on it.
4. **Canes and walkers** are allowed through security checkpoints, but they will be inspected thoroughly by security personnel.
5. **Medications** may be visually inspected instead of being x-rayed; however, you must request this before the screening process begins.
6. **Liquid medications** are allowed through the security checkpoint; however, if they are over 3 ounces, they must be declared to the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) Officer before the screening process begins.
7. Passengers are not required to remove their **shoes** if their disability prevents them from doing so; however, they will be subject to a manual pat-down.
8. Passengers who can't walk or go through the metal detector will be given a manual pat-down. These passengers have the right to a **private screening** and to have a companion present during that screening.
9. Passengers are not required to transfer from their wheelchairs for **manual pat-downs**, but they will be required to lean forward. Make sure and inform the TSA Officer if the person in your care has difficulty moving or has sensitive or sore areas.
10. Inform the TSA Officer before the manual pat-down begins if the person in your care has an **ostomy bag**. Passengers are not required to remove or expose their ostomy bags at TSA checkpoints.
11. If you're picking up or dropping off someone with Alzheimer's at the airport, make sure to **obtain a gate pass** at the check-in counter. This will allow you to pass through the security checkpoint and access the gates.
12. Additional information about security screening policies and procedures for disabled passengers may be obtained by calling the **TSA Cares hotline** at (855) 787-2227.

Candy Harrington has been covering accessible travel exclusively for the past 16 years. She's the editor of *Emerging Horizons* ([www.EmergingHorizons.com](http://www.EmergingHorizons.com)), and the author of several accessible travel titles, including the classic *Barrier-Free Travels: A Nuts and Bolts Guide for Wheelers and Slow Walkers* ([www.barrierfreetravel.net](http://www.barrierfreetravel.net)). She also blogs about accessible travel issues at [www.barrierfreetravels.com](http://www.barrierfreetravels.com).

## Taking Care of Yourself—Planning a Trip

When you anticipate problems, you reduce the chance of emergencies that can spoil a vacation. There is the physical and mental strain of traveling, overexertion by hustling to catch a train, over eating and family conflicts.

Plan the schedule at the time of day when you and the person are at their best. A person with AD is more inclined to wander in unfamiliar places.

Register with your local Alzheimer's Association's Safe Return Program before the trip. During the trip:

- **Maintain daily routine** by having meals, showering and getting up and going to bed at the same time.
- **Take familiar items**, such as a favorite pillow and clothes.
- **Have water and snacks** readily available.
- **Always secure the bedroom door** during your stay.
- **Avoid busy and noisy places**, even relatives with bustling households.

Consider a short trip first to better understand how the person—and you—are able to cope before committing to a long trip.



### Inspiration

*Patience is the companion of wisdom.*

~St. Augustine

## Live Life Laughing!

A truly happy person is one who can enjoy the scenery on a detour.



## Living Will

Take a copy of the living will, which spell's out a person's wishes about medical care, on the trip. Let any other traveling companions know where it is packed.

## AD Affects More Than Memory

Sometimes a person with AD complains of the heat and takes off his or her clothes in public. Best response is to *try to fix what might have led to the undressing*. If the person is hot, offer cooler clothing. For chronic undressers, *try putting clothes on backward* (buttons or zippers in the back), or buy special clothing that's hard to remove. Explain to onlookers that it's the disease at work.

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## **Will the Person with AD Enjoy Being at the Event?**

If you think that the person will be able to enjoy being present—even if he does not understand exactly what is happening and does not recognize the other guests—the experience may still be enjoyable. Checklist for safety and comfort:

- Will there be a place to rest or take a break from the activity?
- Will the behavior of the person with AD interfere with the experience of others?
- Will it be necessary to stay at a hotel or the home of a family member?
- Will adaptive devices such as a raised toilet seat or commode be available?
- Will the person wander around or wake up in the middle of the night and disturb others?
- If the person cannot walk, is the bathroom wheelchair accessible?
- Is there a ramp or an elevator for people who cannot climb steps?

NEXT ISSUE... OXYGEN THERAPY FOR LUNG DISEASE

# Caregiver Assistance News

“ C A R I N G F O R Y O U ... C A R I N G F O R O T H E R S ”

## Q U I C K Q U I Z

There are many family events that the person with dementia can participate in and enjoy. However, even ordinary occasions require *extra* planning so the person with dementia can participate. Read the issue and answer True or False to the questions below.

1. A person with AD may function at a much lower level in unfamiliar surroundings than at home.  
T F
2. People with dementia are very sensitive to the environment they live in. They are less able to handle changes and uncertainty.  
T F
3. A person with AD may become agitated in a strange place and in an over stimulating environment.  
T F
4. Some people with AD do inappropriate things like taking their clothes off in public.  
T F
5. Positive, happy events such as weddings will not upset a person with AD.  
T F
6. A person with Alzheimer's can receive special treatment at airport security.  
T F
7. At an event, it is important there be a place where the person can rest or take a break from the activity.  
T F
8. What used to bother and upset the person before he had AD, will probably not bother him anymore.  
T F
9. It is not important to have a copy of the person's living will while traveling.  
T F
10. A person with AD may wander when visiting a new place.  
T F

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_