



**island health**

Geriatric Specialty Services

## Vacation and Travel Tips

### Planning Your Trip in Advance

The most important thing you can do for both of you is to plan your holiday well in advance. If your loved one is an active participant in planning the vacation, make sure you both agree on what places you'll be visiting, what activities you'll be undertaking, and how you are planning to travel. You don't want to be having these discussions when the trip is underway.

Remember that people with dementia tend to have problems with changes of pace, changes in location, fatigue, large groups of people, changes in time zone, and noise. New places have the potential to increase confusion and cause anxiety, panic, fear or anger.

That is not to say that travel is out of the question. With careful thought and preparation, a holiday can be an enjoyable, rewarding experience. The key is planning ahead; trying to anticipate those things that could go wrong and assessing how to prevent or work around them.

### Things to keep in mind as you plan your holiday:

#### Caregiver:

- Think about the places and activities your loved one used to enjoy - can you adapt these earlier trips to suit your present situation?
- Avoid travelling in peak seasons
- If this is your first trip since the person was diagnosed, try planning a shorter trip, close to home.
- Have all of the necessary documentation - passports, insurance information, doctors' phone numbers, prescription refills, medical records, a copy of your Representation Agreement, etc.
- Have an emergency plan in place in case you become ill.
- Consider your energy level when deciding where to go and what to do. This is your holiday too.
- Have adequate insurance coverage for whatever trip you are planning.
- Make a list of all the things you will need to take with you.
- Make reservations for every destination - don't be caught without a place to stay.

- Be flexible.
- Keep a sense of humour.

### **For your loved one:**

- When packing for a trip, choose clothing that is easy to put on and take off.
- Make a list of the daily itinerary.
- Choose simple grooming accessories.
- You may want to bring along cards to give to servers in restaurants and hotel workers so you can discreetly alert them to the fact you are travelling with a person who has Alzheimer's disease.
- Carry a recent photograph of your loved one. Make sure he/she is registered with the Alzheimer Society's Safely Home program by contacting your local Alzheimer Society of B.C. office or visiting the website.
- Bring familiar items such as favorite music, a pillow, photo album, or specific item of clothing.
- On outings, bring an emergency change of clothes, medications, snacks and a familiar comfort object.

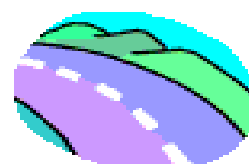
## **Choosing the Best Way to Get There**

### **Travel by Car**

One of the best things about travelling by car is that you can control the pace of the trip. You can decide what time to start, when to take a break, and when to turn around and go home. The downside is that it can be pretty stressful to drive if your loved one becomes upset or agitated during the trip.

If you are planning a long trip by car, the following suggestions might help:

- Never leave a person who has dementia alone in the car.
- Have activities that the person will enjoy - sing-alongs, simple care games, favourite music.
- Make sure clothing is comfortable and easy to remove when using washrooms.
- Plan your itinerary well in advance and give a copy to friends or family.
- Have the car serviced and equipped with emergency supplies.
- Bring along wet wipes for easy clean up and a covered cup with straw.
- Take frequent breaks and stop early in the day.
- If the person becomes argumentative or confused, stop as soon as possible.



- Use restroom facilities at regular intervals.
- Keep seatbelts buckled and doors locked at all times.

## **Travel by Plane**

When making the reservations:

- Build a window of time with flexible connections so you are not rushing through the airport with your loved one.
- Reserve bulkhead (first row) seats to avoid other passengers.
- Try for as few connecting flights (plane changes) as possible.
- Ask about services and lounges for disabled persons - arrange to use them.
- Avoid travelling at peak travel times (Thanksgiving, Christmas) and when there will be a high risk of weather delays.
- Be sure the person with dementia is carrying identification.
- The metal detectors are often crowded and can be a source of anxiety and confusion. Avoid wearing metal buckles or buttons.
- Minimize carry-on luggage, but be sure to carry on medications. Pack all the suitcases for your loved one.
- If your loved one takes prescriptive travel medication, ask your doctor about when to expect its peak action.
- Avoid caffeine and limit fluid intake. Never let the person drink alcohol on the plane!



### **During the flight -**

- Pre-board with other passengers requiring extra time.
- Sit the person with dementia in a seat next to the window so they only interact with you.

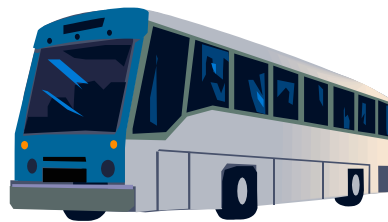
### **Before, after or between flights -**

- Spend minimal time waiting in crowded gates.
- Use wheelchair or electric carts to travel from gate to gate.
- If there is a long layover, check for a lounge for disabled persons or another quiet area in which you can wait in peace.
- Carry all important papers yourself. Do not give your loved one boarding passes or passports.
- Bring favourite food as a snack, magazines and games to use for diversions, and a sweater if it is cool.
- Have someone meet your plane whenever possible.

## Bus Tours

Bus tours may not be flexible enough for your needs. If you choose to tour by bus, make sure the trips are short, and if possible, go with a group of familiar people.

- Skip planned activities if your loved one becomes tired.
- Try to set up the room the same way each night.
- Don't pack in front of the person.
- Have plans to leave the tour at several points in case your loved one becomes unable to continue.
- Carry an "occupied" sign for restrooms.
- Comfortable clothing that allows for ease in using restrooms is essential.



## Tour and Cruises

- Make your own airline reservations to increase flexibility at the beginning or end of a cruise.
- Keep the schedule simple and plan to go to bed early.
- Check in regularly with family members. Give them a copy of your itinerary.
- Take extra medications with you and a medical history in case of emergencies.

## RV Travel

These tips may help make RV travelling a positive experience -

- Take time to let your loved one adjust to new surroundings.
- Find out what supports and resources are available in the areas you are visiting (churches, community services, Alzheimer Society, etc.)
- If in moving from place to place your loved one becomes confused, stop and rest - for a few days, if necessary.

## Hotel Stays

Hotel vacations can be a wonderful opportunity to relax and be pampered a bit.

To make the experience more enjoyable, consider the following tips -

- Book a large, quiet room in advance of your arrival.
- Take familiar pajamas, robe, slippers, and if possible, pillows.
- Use room service the night you arrive.
- Take several night lights with you for the bathroom and bedroom.

- Evaluate the room for safety and remove potential hazards. Unplug the coffee maker, hair dryer, etc.
- Assess the risks for becoming lost or wandering.
- If there are two beds in the room, sleep in the one closest to the door.
- If you are a sound sleeper and your loved one is not, obtain a door alarm from a catalogue specializing in travel needs.
- Travel with a childproof doorknob cover to use if the room doorknob is round.
- Avoid rooms with sliding glass doors leading to the outside. Travel with a sun catcher that can be stuck to a glass door to prevent your loved one from walking into the glass.
- Allow extra time for everything, including bathing and dressing. Lay toiletries and clothing out in plain view to avoid confusion.
- Carry only comfortable clothing that allows for ease in using the toilet.
- Provide time for naps. Rest is important for both you and your loved one.

## Visiting Family and Friends

Family and friends should be warned about types of problems and situations that may arise so they can prepare for your arrival.

Be open about what to expect; do not be embarrassed or inhibited about expressing concern. For example, share with family and friends what types of groups your loved one might enjoy, whether it is one on one contact or larger groups; whether they enjoy lots of activities or prefer not to be pressed into doing too much.

Friends and family are often eager to help in whatever way they can but often need to be told **how** they can help. Perhaps also organize times when friends and family can spend time so you can have a break.

