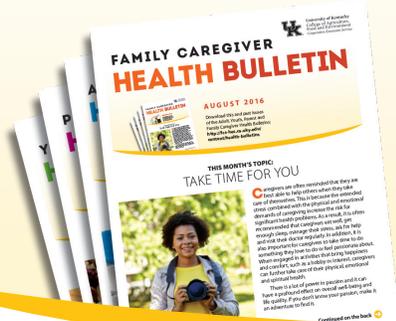




# FAMILY CAREGIVER

# HEALTH BULLETIN



DECEMBER 2018

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## THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

# ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE: PREPARING FOR THE HOLIDAYS



**T**he holidays are often about being thankful, celebrating and getting together with family and friends. But this time of year can also be a challenge for caregivers of those living with Alzheimer's Disease because of emotional stress and added expectations caregivers place on themselves to make the season a good experience. In order to make the holidays positive, happy and memorable, caregivers must plan and adjust expectations. The following tips are from the Alzheimer's Association of Texas.

### Preparing the person with Alzheimer's Disease

- Talk about and show photos of the people who are coming to visit.

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# Have a quiet room if things get too hectic and have a familiar person stay with them so they don't feel isolated or left out.

## ➔ Continued from page 1

- Play familiar holiday music and serve favorite holiday foods.
- Watch and/or help with decorations.
- Persons with AD may recognize faces of family members and friends, but can't recall their names — name tags might be helpful.
- Have a quiet room if things get too hectic and have a familiar person stay with them so they don't feel isolated or left out.
- Prepare for distractions beforehand (i.e. use of a photo album) to divert attention if problem behaviors occur.

### Preparing visitors

- Delegate tasks to family members to make your day easier.
- Encourage them to visit, but to call ahead and arrange a good time.
- Have visitors come during the part of the day you know your loved one is at his/her best.
- Familiarize visitors with behavior and condition changes of your loved one with AD, so they will not be shocked by the appearance or behavior of the person.
- Explain why you are limiting the length of the visit and the number of visitors.
- Watch for signs of fatigue and alert the family when it is time for them to leave.

### Selecting activities

- Manage your expectations by not taking on too much and choosing a few activities that are the most important to you and your loved one.
- Use past interests as a guide. When the activity is first introduced, if there is no interest, try again later.
- Slow the pace of the activity to allow the person with AD to comprehend as well as enjoy the sensory pleasure from the activity.
- Some activity suggestions (based on ability to succeed and for satisfaction and safety) are to make ornaments; decorate a tree; decorate cookies; package baked goods; polish silver or the menorah; set the table; wrap boxes;

seal or stamp holiday cards; sing or listen to songs; enjoy photos, videos or slides of family and past holidays; stories; or walks.

### Preparing your home

- Music and movies bring back your most cherished memories of the holidays, however, music that is too loud or vigorous might be unsettling to your loved one.
- People with Alzheimer's might become disoriented by blinking lights and by decorations which substantially change a familiar environment, so keep it simple.

### Maintaining safety

- Create a clear pathway for walking; avoid wires, cords or throw rugs.
- Use ribbon or yarn instead of sharp hooks to hang ornaments and decorations.
- Avoid decorating with items that look edible.
- Avoid confusing, blinking lights.
- Do not leave lighted candles or fireplace unattended.
- Use plastic or silk mistletoe rather than real ones; if eaten it is toxic.

Following these tips, caregivers are more likely to lessen stress and frustration, prepare family members, and help provide opportunities to seek better communication, connection and support.

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**FAMILY CAREGIVER  
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