



BAI Beacon

The Newsletter from Family and Community Services

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Home for the Holidays: A Guide for Visiting Family

A classic holiday song extols the virtue: "There's no place like home for the holidays." Americans tend to heed that advice and travel to spend time with parents and other family whom they may not have seen for a year or longer. Holiday visits can be stressful under the best of circumstances as we try to recapture past relationships and relive family traditions. When a family member has mild-to-moderate dementia everything changes. Common situations include:

- The person with dementia may not recognize his/her new limitations and insist on performing holiday traditions as in the past. This may include trying to send large numbers of holiday cards, shopping for a long list of gifts, attending crowded holiday activities, hosting parties, and planning elaborate meals. This can result in frustration, failure, and behavioral problems.
- Extra people in the house can cause confusion and interrupt set routines, no matter how helpful guests try to be. Visitors can cause additional work for an already overburdened person and caregiver.
- Additional noise from visiting young or adolescent children may cause a person with dementia to be angry with them.
- Decorating the house for the holidays can increase confusion or cause even a lack of recognition of personal surroundings.
- Family members who have not yet accepted the person's cognitive or functional decline might try to encourage the person to perform traditions beyond the person's capacity.
- Old family conflicts can resurface and cause behavioral problems when aired.

So does this mean families should not visit during the holidays? No, but it does mean that families need to be prepared to modify their expectations and travel plans to take into consideration the person with dementia and their caregiver's changing needs and priorities. Some examples include:

- Follow the old rule of visiting and limit your visit to three days. If the person has moderate dementia it might be best to have family members visit one or two days at a time rather than all at once.
- Do not plan to stay in the home of the person with dementia. Book a hotel room. The same goes for having the person with dementia who visits you. The hotel room allows for rest periods for the person. We have had many caregivers report that this was hugely successful.
- Bring food. It is best to bring it prepared, but if necessary prepare it in the person's kitchen without expecting help. Many supermarkets and restaurants offer take-out holiday dinners including full-sized cooked turkey. Take the expedient route for meal preparations such as serving refrigerated mashed potatoes that can be quickly heated in the microwave.



(Continued)

Mild Disease

- Telephone with pictures of people on speed dial - www.alzstore.com
- Electric medication dispenser - www.alzstore.com
- Medic Alert/Safe Return ID band - www.alz.org
- Gift certificate for grocery delivery
- Monthly cleaning services
- GPS on cell phone (check with your cell provider)
- Lifeline - www.lifelinesys.com
- Electric sonic toothbrush
- Hand-held shower head
- A gift certificate of your time such as a monthly lunch date
- Wii Exercise program
- Schedule an appointment to "Make Me a Memory" DVD - a personalized life story. Call Deidra @ 692-839-6850 to schedule.

Moderate Disease

- Food basket with non-perishable items
- Bathroom grab rails
- Favorite bath products and a nonskid safety surface for tub
- Cleaning help
- Respite services such as in-home companion and adult day programming
- Vintage videos and music
- Family photos in an album labeled with who is in each picture and where it was taken

Advanced Dementia

- A Rollator-type walker with two wheels or rear wheel retractable brakes, seat, and basket (no hand brakes)
- Gift certificates for care supplies such as adult elimination garments
- Respite care
- Scented oils, especially lavender, for massage
- Picture books
- Music
- Coloring books and crayons

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- Do not expect the person to clean up after a meal, cooking activity, or visit. If you stay in the guest room, clean it as well as your bathroom, bedding and bath linens. Do that laundry before you leave.
- If baking holiday treats, use refrigerated dough, frozen pies, and do not let the task exceed 90 minutes.
- Shopping trips should be completed quickly (follow the 90-minute rule) and at times when the crowds are minimal, such as a Monday or Tuesday early morning.
- Keep holiday decorations simple and do not put presents out until you want them opened. Be careful in displaying non-food objects that could be mistaken for candy and sweets; people with moderate dementia may mistakenly try to eat them.
- Before attending a holiday gathering or special event, ALWAYS ask both the person and their caregiver if they want to go. If either one says “No!” don’t try to convince them to go. “No” means “No!”
- People with dementia NEED additional rest to prevent behavioral issues. They tire quickly. Fatigue is heightened by noise and groups of people. Make absolutely sure the person has time to rest in a quiet place (with no TV on) twice a day at the very minimum.
- If there is family conflict, address it outside of the person and caregiver’s home as it can cause significant behavioral problems.
- Use reminiscing, music, and pictures when trying to keep the person engaged in an activity.

The above guidelines are all about keeping the holidays simple and comfortable. People with dementia can still enjoy the best of the holiday season. Just remember to simplify and enjoy.

Happy Holidays from Everyone at BAI!



Ask The Expert

Jan Dougherty

Dear Jan:

My mother has always been a holiday fanatic, shopping for decorations year round. Decorations were up the day after Halloween and dozens of cards sent the day after Thanksgiving. She baked dozens of fancy cookies and purchased gifts for all of her children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews. Mom directed the local holiday pageant for years until they replaced her with a younger person two years ago, upsetting her greatly. Mom just loved the holidays.

But last year she stopped. Dad said she just got tired of it all, but I can’t imagine that. He just doesn’t want to push her. I know she has memory loss but I can’t imagine that she would forget the holidays. I know she wants to keep her holiday traditions alive. How can I convince Dad that Mom needs to do this – not only for her, but for her family?

Signed,
Holiday Blues

Dear Blues:

One of the biggest changes with a dementing illness is the loss of the ability to plan, initiate, and sequence the parts of an activity in order to complete it – especially when the person thinks about it. It sounds as if your mom’s holiday activities are too complicated for her to perform them alone. And from your dad’s response, he may be too overwhelmed with her care and his increasing household responsibilities.

One way to beat your blues might be to spend time with your mom doing a modified and scaled-down version of the cherished activities. For example, you might help her by addressing 10-20 cards and writing in any messages she suggests for recipients. You might spend an afternoon making slice-and-bake cookies. You might help her with a modified gift list with easy suggestions such as movie tickets and then take her shopping early one morning to purchase a special gift for your dad.

Most importantly, it is time to rethink the holidays from being an extravaganza to a simple and cozy time that you and your parents can both enjoy.

On behalf of all the staff at Banner Alzheimer’s Institute, we thank you for allowing us to be involved in the care of your family members during 2012. We wish you a safe and healthy holiday season.

Have a question?
To submit your question for future consideration email us at
baiinfo@bannerhealth.com

Gifts for the Caregiver

- Chocolate
- Periodic afternoons out or a weekend away
- Assorted greeting cards
- A gift certificate for driving or accompanying the caregiver and recipient to appointments
- A subscription to a favorite magazine
- Things to do while alone such as a crossword puzzle or Sudoku book
- Locks for doors and windows
- Accompanying the caregiver to Alzheimer’s support group meetings

Beacon Bits

COMPASS for Caregivers

(Caregivers Of Memory-impaired Persons Acquiring Successful Strategies)
Monday, Dec. 3, 4 – 5:30 p.m. OR Thursday, Dec. 20, 10 – 11:30 a.m.
Banner Alzheimer’s Institute, Third Floor Conference Room
901 E. Willetta St., Phoenix
Registration: (602) 839-6850;
Baiinfo@bannerhealth.com

First Friday Making Music, Making Memories Session

Friday, Dec. 7, 10 – 11:30 a.m.
Pyle Adult Recreation Center
655 E. Southern Ave. Tempe
Registration: (602) 839-6850;
Baiinfo@bannerhealth.com

Planning Ahead Class for Caregivers

Monday, Dec. 10, 4 – 6pm
Banner Alzheimer’s Institute,
Third Floor Conference Room
901 E. Willetta St. Phoenix
Registration: (602) 839-6850;
Baiinfo@bannerhealth.com

GPS (Giving People Strategies for Memory Lecture):

Topic: “Avoiding Arguments and Improving Communication Strategies in Dementia”
Friday, Dec. 14, 10:30 a.m. – noon
Rio Vista Recreation Center
8866 W. Thunderbird Road, Peoria
Registration required: (602) 230-CARE

GPS (Giving People Strategies for Memory Lecture):

Topic: “When will We Find Effective Treatment for Alzheimer’s Disease?”
Friday, Jan. 11, 2013 10:30 a.m. – noon
Musical Instrument Museum
4725 E. Mayo Blvd.
Phoenix, AZ 85050
Registration required: (602) 230-CARE

Check out the 2013 GPS Lecture Series now in four locations!

January, May, September at the Musical Instrument Museum, Phoenix

February, June, October at Banner Sun Health Research Institute, Sun City

March, July, November at Banner Gateway, Gilbert

April, August, December at Ahwatukee Recreation Center, Phoenix

Topics will include: “When are We Going to Find Effective Treatment for AD?”, “Important Discussions and Decisions in Dementia,” and “Changing Roles and Relationships in Dementia.”

Brain Health Tip:

The health benefits of tea have been understood by the Chinese for over 4600 years. Enjoy a cup of green tea which is loaded with antioxidants and may help protect brain cells from injury.

Our Mission

To end Alzheimer’s disease without losing a generation, to set a new standard of care for patients and their families, and to forge a model of collaboration in biomedical research.