

Travel can be stressful for your family member with dementia. Changes in routine upset their feelings of stability and familiarity. However, you can set it up so that it is easier for everyone.

A good first step towards taking your loved one on a longer trip is to plan a day outing or staycation (overnight in your own city). **Some things to take into consideration:**



Plan the day with ample time to allow your loved one to decompress from each activity.



Allow time for a nap, if necessary.



Choose locations that are quieter, with fewer people, and less waiting time.



Make sure that restrooms can accommodate any limitations.



Start your outing at a calmer part of the day for your loved one.



Let people know about your older adult by creating business sized cards to hand to clerks or restaurant staff. They can say something like “My family member has dementia. We are giving them a fun outing but they might say or do things that are unexpected. Thank you for understanding.”



Be ready to change your plans if your loved one seems to be agitated.



It is not a failure on anyone’s part if your loved one can’t handle what you’ve planned. Kudos to you for trying to give them some normalcy or fun.

Source: [National Institute of Health](#)



## Prepare your Family Members Before a Visit



Your extended family will be excited to see their loved one but may not know how to interact. Here are some easy guidelines:

- Keep greetings and interactions calm.
- Don’t speak to your loved one as if they are a child.
- Respect personal space and ask permission for hugs and touch.
- Make eye contact and call the person by name.
- Don’t argue if the person seems confused. Change the subject instead.
- Prepare to have an activity to share – a photo album, simple game, music or a walk outside.

Source: [Daily Caring](#)

If you feel that your loved one can handle an extended trip, use what you've learned from your day trips in planning for your extended time.

## Before the trip:

- Talk with your medical team to determine if there are medications that can calm them during the travel days. Be prepared to use these only if necessary, since a sleepy traveler can make changing planes or moving from place to place more difficult.
- Take advantage of available assistance at the bus terminal, train station, or airport.
- Bring snacks that your senior likes so that you are not reliant on restaurants or airline foods.
- Make sure to bring important documents including insurance information, doctors' names and phone numbers, medication lists, and medical records.
- Pack items for your loved one that are familiar to them and that they like holding for comfort. If they don't have something, get them a gift of a sensory blanket, soft stuffed toy or fidget game several weeks prior to the trip to see if any of those help calm them in difficult times.
- Get an ID bracelet that is difficult for them to remove in case they wander off.
- Ensure that you have a current photo.
- If you are going to visit family, spend a little time beforehand looking through photo albums and talking about the people in those albums.



## Once you arrive at your destination:

- Give them the opportunity to rest in a quiet location with familiar faces. Even if you are visiting family, they may not immediately feel comfortable with people they haven't seen in a while.
- Plan activities that can be stepped out of easily, if necessary.
- Pre-identify restroom locations.
- Try to keep the sleep and food schedules similar to their schedules at home.



Source: [National Institute of Health](#) and [Special Needs Alliance](#)

## It's OK Not to Bring Your Loved One

At the end of the day, if you are planning this trip because you would like to see family and are unsure if it's something your loved one will enjoy, reconsider whether they need to join you. Sometimes the kindest thing you can do is to leave them in the comfort of their own home with a caregiver they trust, while you take the break that you've earned.

Source: [Daily Caring](#)

If you are concerned that they'll be missing an important family gathering such as a wedding, graduation, or reunion, they can be included through video chat without the stress of travel and large gatherings.

