

Layton Aging & Alzheimer's Disease Center

Traveling

Oregon Health & Science University
3181 SW Sam Jackson Park Road, CR-131
Portland, OR 97239-3098
503.494.6976

Traveling can be stressful for a person with memory problems or dementia. The impaired person may be unable to remember or process a detailed explanation of the trip. Often difficult behaviors will intensify or new ones may surface due to unfamiliar surroundings, people and routines.

PLANNING

- Stick with the familiar. Travel in ways that the person was accustomed to before memory problems.
- Plan a short trip if you're unsure how the person will respond to traveling for longer times and distances.
- Be sure you can leave early if the person wants to go home or is more difficult than you anticipated.
- Remember that you'll be in charge, and responsible for both of you. Take along contingency plan information: medication, M.D. phone number, and emergency contact.

COMFORT

- Take along a security object such as a favorite sweater, picture of family member, etc.
- Take along familiar favorite calming music.
- Take a pillow from home.
- Take an "occupied" sign for public restrooms should your assistance be necessary in the opposite sex restroom.

REST

- Maintain the usual daily routine.

- Avoid constant, on-the-go schedules that create chaos and fatigue.
- Plan rest and relaxation at least twice during the day.
- Avoid large groups or crowds of people.
- It may be better to rent a motel room rather than stay with friends and relatives.
- Maintain familiar eating schedules. Consider room service if large restaurants are confusing.

SAFETY

- Register with the Alzheimer's Association "Safe Return" program, 1-800-7330402.
- ID bracelet should be worn.
- Carry a recent photo that clearly shows facial features.
- Note clothing worn by person with memory problems, in case wandering occurs.
- Never leave the person alone. Try to avoid relying on strangers for assistance or supervision of the person with memory problems. People who are unfamiliar with the effects of the disease may not know how to respond.