

5 TIPS for caregivers

TIPS FOR (SUCCESSFUL!) TRAVEL

We all need a vacation once in a while. A vacation from work, a vacation from home, or just to see something new! And you probably have fond memories of a favorite trip – perhaps a road trip as a child, an exotic honeymoon, or a favorite weekend retreat. A diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease can take the “vacation” out of vacation planning – but travel is certainly not impossible! Whether you’re planning a day trip to visit family or a cross-country excursion, there are ways to minimize the anxiety, and allow everyone to enjoy the vacation. Here are a few tips to keep in mind for successful travel.

1 Keep the routine.

You probably have a routine at home. Dinner is around the same time each night, you always take a shower in the morning, and you walk the dog in the afternoon. And while you are not be doing the exact same things on vacation (hopefully!), try to keep your routine to make things as familiar as possible. Stick to some of the main components of the person’s normal “at-home” schedule as much as possible. Go to bed at the same time, wake up the same time, and try to eat around the same times. Also, keep the “tasks” the same—if they take a shower at night, and then brush their teeth, and then put their pajamas on—keep that routine. With everything else being new, this is not the time to start trying a morning shower!

2 Can I see some ID?

When traveling, we all know to bring our IDs. Ensure before you leave that you have all the proper identification needed for you and your loved one. This can be especially important to remember if they’re no longer driving or have a valid license – they will still need to have some kind of identification card! Make copies of your IDs to stick in your suitcase just in case. Additionally, you can also create a quick “flyer” with your loved one’s information (including medications, allergies, etc.) AND a recent picture. When traveling through an airport, a train station, or somewhere with a larger number of people, if your loved one gets separated from the group, you can easily hand your flyer to gate attendants, security, or even the police if needed. With ID, it’s better safe than sorry!

3 Get some Zzzs.

Don’t underestimate the value of a good night’s sleep! Even if you’ve planned a relatively relaxing vacation, the change from home can sometimes be stressful and tiring for your loved one. If you are staying in a hotel, try to reserve a quiet room at the end of the hallway or away from

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the lobby, elevator, or pool to limit the number of external distractions. If you’re driving, try to limit the amount of time in the car, taking breaks when needed, and especially at night. When flying, try to limit the number of layovers, again aiming to keep with a normal sleeping routine. Everyone is less cranky with a good night’s sleep!

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4 Remember the meds.

Is your loved one on a strict medication routine?

While it can be easy to forget on vacation, it's important to keep the same medication routine too. Be sure to have a typed list of the medication routine, including medication name, dose, and frequency, especially if you're with family or friends who may not know the schedule. Keep the list in a safe place, such as a plastic sheet protector to avoid any water spills, especially if you're at the beach. In addition, keep the medications with you, or near you at all times. If you're flying, you may consider bringing all medications in a carry-on, if possible, in case there is any delay in getting your checked luggage.

5 Make a (realistic!) plan.

Plan ahead and be realistic. Take time in advance to plan out the trip. Remember, people with memory impairment respond to their environment, so if you end up stressed out when you can't find the hotel, more than likely, they will pick up on your stress and start exhibiting signs of stress and anxiety themselves. But most importantly be realistic. Understand that you may not get to everything you have planned – and that's okay! A nice afternoon nap back at the hotel or sitting down for a cup of coffee at the local coffee shop might be more fun than seeing that 7th museum anyway. Have a back-up plan if an activity isn't going well, or just take a break. Everyone will have more fun, whether you hit one site on the list or all ten. And after all, isn't having fun the whole point of vacation?



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