

Celebrating the holidays in long-term care

Preparation for the holidays can be stressful and tiring even under the best of circumstances. For families and caregivers of individuals with Alzheimer's who may be [taken care of by professionals](#), the holidays can be just that much more challenging. However, with acceptance and planning, they can be sources of great pleasure. The holiday season can provide an increased opportunity for family and friends to visit someone living in long-term care. Traditional holiday activities which the families have enjoyed throughout the years are going to change but new traditions emerge.

Here are some suggestions that may make visits more enjoyable:

Remember that normal routines provide a sense of security for those who are dealing with a dementia so it may be unwise to plan to take them to a different environment with much noise and holiday excitement. If you wish to try to include them in the usual festivities, be sure to have a plan in place to take them back early to the long-term care facility if needed.

Check ahead with the long-term care residence about holiday policies. If there's a party planned, try to attend to show support for the staff as well as your family member or friend.

Talk to staff in advance; they usually know best what residents can handle.

Make celebrations simple; it's your presence that counts.

Bring a favorite book or piece of music and read or sing together.

Do group activities like going for walks together.

Reminisce about past holidays or events to help trigger happy memories.

Ask the person if they'd like to involve other residents in your family celebrations.

Plan shorter but more frequent visits and limit the number of visitors.

Arrange for other family or friends to visit if you're unable to do so.

It's very important to keep an eye on how the person reacts during gatherings and you should respond to their needs as well as their health; don't overstay your visit if the person seems tired, distressed, or in pain. Though rare, this may not be a result of their condition and instead of care home abuse or neglect, especially if the person has a poorly treated injury (click the following link for more information from [Illinois nursing home abuse lawyers](#) if you suspect this has happened).

With careful thought and planning you and your loved one will be able to share a meaningful holiday season and above all, know that your visits do make a positive difference. (The above information thanks to Alzheimer Association Midland Chapter and Holiday in a long term care home Alzheimer Society Newfoundland and Labrador.)

January is Alzheimer Awareness Month and the North Hastings office of the Alzheimer Society of Hastings-Prince Edward and Co-Chairs the Bancroft and Area Realtors Association are pleased to invite the North Hastings residents to participate in the sixth annual Walk for Alzheimer's Saturday, Jan. 30 at the North Hasting High School gym from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Pledge forms are available at local real estate offices, the North Hasting office of the Alzheimer Society or you can register as a walker or sponsor a walker at www.walkforalzheimers.ca.

For more information call 613-332-4616.

If you have any questions or concerns about Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia, please contact the Alzheimer Society at

613-332-4614. Learn more at www.alzheimer.ca/hpe
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