

DUKE DEMENTIA FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Caregiver Connections

An Educational Webinar Series With The Experts

**The presentation will begin shortly.
Thank you for your patience!**

dukefamilysupport.org

919-660-7510

Caregiving During the Holidays

alzheimer's  association®

THE BRAINS BEHIND SAVING YOURS®

Program goals

By the end of today's program, you will be able to:

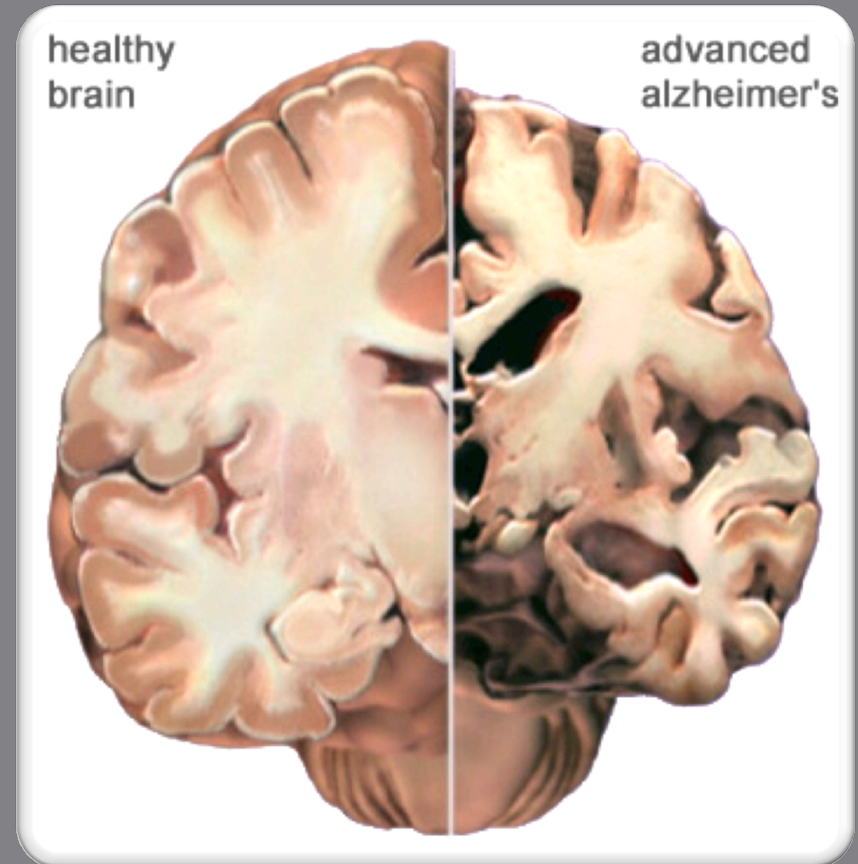
- ✓ Gain understanding of Alzheimer's disease & dementia
- ✓ Provide care for yourself & your loved one during the holidays
- ✓ Adjust expectations & holiday plans to you and your loved one's needs & abilities
- ✓ Remain flexible & educate family and friends about the disease, holiday safety, & sensitivity

Alzheimer's and Related Dementias

- Dementia
 - Umbrella term describing the loss of cognitive function, serious enough to interfere with daily functioning.
- Alzheimer's disease
 - Most common type of dementia
 - Symptoms may vary widely
 - symptoms result from damage to the brain's nerve cells

Alzheimer's Disease

- Causes changes in:
 - Memory
 - Language
 - Thought
 - Navigation
 - Behavior
 - Personality/Mood
 - Planning and Organizing



Alzheimer's Disease Stages of Progression

- Early Stage (Mild)
 - Recent memory loss
 - Difficulty handling social situations or following conversation
- Middle Stage (Moderate)
 - Difficulty with language and communication,
 - May require assistance with basic activities
- Late Stage (Advanced)
 - Long and short term memory affected
 - May require around-the-clock personal care

Holiday Challenges

For families living with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, the holidays can be challenging

- How do we maintain traditions?
- How can we incorporate travel?
- How do we plan for entertaining visitors?
- How do we assess if the environment is safe?
- How do we involve our loved one with Alzheimer's?

Caring for the Person with Dementia

- Evaluate the individual's needs
- Expect changes
- Note the affect of the environment
- Check in with family periodically
- Focus on activities that bring happiness while building on past traditions
- Encourage participation



Caring for Yourself

- Balance solitude with sociability
- Plan something just for yourself
- Focus on moments of joy
- Plan ahead
- Ask for assistance
- Enjoy spending time with those you love



Adjust Expectations

- Plan for a family holiday discussion
 - Telephone, video chat, email, or in person
- Give yourself permission to do only what you can reasonably manage
- Ensure Family understands caregiving situation
 - Consider writing a letter or email to familiarize others with your situation

Sample Letter:

"I'm writing to let you know how things are going at our house. We're looking forward to your visit, and we thought it might be helpful for you to understand our current situation before you arrive.

- You may notice that ____ has changed since you last saw him/her. Among the changes you may notice are ____.
- I've enclosed a picture so you know how ____ looks now.
- Because ____ sometimes has problems remembering and thinking clearly, his/her behavior is a little unpredictable.
- Please understand that ____ may not remember who you are and may confuse you with someone else. Please don't feel offended by this. He/she appreciates your being with us and so do we.
- Please treat ____ as you would any person. A warm smile and a gentle touch on ____'s shoulder or hand will be appreciated more than you know.

We would ask that you call when you're nearby so we can prepare for your arrival. With your help & support, we can create a holiday memory that we'll all treasure."

Involve the person with Alzheimer's

- Involve the person in safe, manageable holiday preparation activities that he or she enjoys
 - Food Preparation
 - Gift Wrapping
 - Decorating
- Maintain the person's normal routine as much as possible
- Build on traditions and memories

Adapt Gift Giving

- What types of Gifts can be considered enjoyable for the individual with Alzheimer's?
 - Adaptive clothing..
 - Favorite activities, foods, hobbies..
 - Sensory related gifts that ensure safety..



Adapt Gift Giving

- Gift giving extends to the caregiver also:
 - Housecleaning
 - Lawn or handyman services
 - Laundry services
 - Restaurant gift cards
 - Volunteer services to visit with the individual to give caregiver respite

Flexibility

- Do a variation on a theme
- Avoid any known triggers
- Arrange for in-home care and respite



Traveling

- Go with traveling options that provide the most comfort & the least anxiety
- Stick with the familiar
- Travel to known destinations
- Try to visit places that were familiar before the onset of dementia

Tips for Safe Traveling

- Keep the person safe by taking precautions
- Have a bag of essentials with you at all times
- Pack necessary items
- Create an itinerary
- Consider the best time of day for individual

When the individual lives in a Care Community

- Consider joining your loved one at the community for holiday activities:
 - Bring a favorite holiday food to share (discuss prior with management)
 - Sing holiday songs and ask if other residents can join in
 - Read a favorite holiday story or poem out loud
 - Share holiday traditions and culture with friends and neighbors

Holiday Safety

Consider safety options both in the home & in care communities:

- Identify certain foods that may cause choking
- Simplify portion sizes placed on the dinner plate
- Assess potential hazardous decorations
- Limit shopping with the person with dementia
- Try and keep noise levels at a minimum

Visiting during the Holidays

- Focus on enjoyment, not achievement
- Encourage involvement in daily life
- Look for favorites
- Change activities as needed
- Consider time of day
- Adjust visits & activities to disease stages

Remember during visits:

- Be Creative
 - Be Flexible
 - Be Tolerant of Confusion and Emotions
 - Be Patient
- ✓ Rule of Thumb: Make the Most of each Moment

Advice for your visitors

- Plan accordingly based on individual
 - Visit regularly and dependably for short periods at the “best time” for the individual.
- Focus on one-on-one visits; they are often less confusing than large groups.
- Recognize and use humor, affection, and praise.

The Gift of Perspective

Alzheimer's Blog: How many families are dealing with visitors and new perspectives.



Resources to access during Holidays

- Alz.org/care
 - Caregiver Center
 - <https://www.alz.org/care/alzheimers-dementia-holidays.asp>
 - Alzheimer's Navigator
 - ALZConnected Community Boards
 - Community Resource Finder
- Local Chapter
 - www.alz.org/northcarolina
 - 24 hour Helpline 1.800.272-3900



Questions?

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800.272.3900 | [alz.org](https://www.alz.org)®

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Thank you for joining us today!

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