



FAMILY CAREGIVER HOLIDAY SURVIVAL GUIDE

How to Use This Guide

The holidays can be joyful and stressful—especially when you’re caring for an aging loved one.

This guide will help you:

- Keep your loved one **safe** during holiday gatherings.
- Notice **early warning signs** that more help may be needed.
- Understand the differences between **home care, home health, and hospice**.
- Create **meaningful moments** between older and younger generations

Use this as a checklist before, during, and after holiday visits.

Holiday Safety Checklist



Home & Environment Safety

- **Clear walkways:** Remove clutter, cords, loose rugs, and holiday décor from paths.
- **Good lighting:** Add nightlights in hallways, bathrooms, and bedrooms.
- **Safe stairs:** Ensure handrails are sturdy; avoid carrying large loads on stairs.
- **Bathroom safety:** Use non-slip mats; consider a shower chair and grab bars.

- **Temperature checks:** Keep the home comfortably warm; dress in layers.
- **Pet awareness:** Watch for tripping hazards from excited pets.



Medication & Health Safety

- **Medication list:** Keep an updated list of all medications and doses.
- **Medication schedule:** Set alarms or reminders so doses aren't missed during busy days.
- **Alcohol use:** Limit or avoid alcohol for seniors, especially with medications.
- **Hydration:** Encourage water throughout the day; offer decaf options in the evening.
- **Energy levels:** Plan rest periods between activities and outings.



Social & Emotional Safety

- **Avoid overstimulation:** Large, noisy gatherings can be overwhelming. Offer a quiet room.
- **Shorter visits:** It's okay to keep events shorter and simpler this year.
- **Familiar routines:** Keep meal times, medications, and bedtime as close to normal as possible.
- **Gentle introductions:** Remind your loved one who people are, especially if memory is changing.



Things to Look Out For During Holiday Visits

Use holiday time together as a natural “check-in” on how your loved one is really doing.

Changes in the Home

- Piles of unopened mail or unpaid bills
- Spoiled food in the refrigerator or very little food in the house
- Strong odors, poor housekeeping, or unsafe clutter
- Burn marks on pans or stove, or appliances left on

Changes in Personal Care

- Wearing the same clothes repeatedly
- Noticeable body odor or poor hygiene
- Uncombed hair, unbrushed teeth, or overgrown nails
- Weight loss or gain that you can see or feel

Changes in Thinking or Mood

- Repeating the same questions or stories often
- Confusion about the day, time, or where they are
- Increased anxiety, irritability, or withdrawal from activities
- Seeming unusually sad, hopeless, or tearful



Warning Signs a Higher Level of Care May Be Needed

These signs suggest it may be time to explore extra support such as home care, home health, or hospice.

Safety Red Flags

- Recent falls or frequent “near falls”
- Leaving doors unlocked or wandering outside
- Forgetting to turn off the stove or oven
- Getting lost in familiar places
- Driving concerns: new dents on the car, traffic tickets, or getting lost while driving

Health & Daily Living Red Flags

- Skipping medications or taking them incorrectly
- Trouble managing diabetes, heart failure, COPD, or other chronic conditions
- Difficulty with basic tasks: bathing, dressing, toileting, or getting in/out of a chair
- Shortness of breath with minimal activity
- Noticeable decline in strength, balance, or endurance

Emotional & Cognitive Red Flags

- Significant memory loss that disrupts daily life
- Suspicion, paranoia, or seeing/hearing things that aren’t there
- Major personality changes
- Loss of interest in hobbies, friends, or family

If you’re seeing several of these at once, it’s time to talk with a healthcare provider and explore support options.



Home Care vs. Home Health vs. Hospice

Understanding the differences can make decisions easier.

Non-Medical Home Care

Focus: **Help with daily activities and safety at home.** - Assistance with bathing, dressing, toileting - Meal preparation and light housekeeping - Medication reminders (not medication management) - Companionship and supervision - Transportation to appointments and errands

Best for: Seniors who want to stay at home but need help with day-to-day tasks or safety.

Home Health (Skilled Care at Home)

Focus: **Medical care ordered by a doctor.** - Skilled nursing (wound care, injections, monitoring conditions) - Physical, occupational, or speech therapy - Short-term after a hospital stay, surgery, or health change

Best for: Seniors recovering from illness, injury, or surgery who need medical treatment at home.

Hospice Care

Focus: **Comfort and quality of life at the end of life.** - For people with a serious illness and a life expectancy of about 6 months or less (as determined by a doctor) - Pain and symptom management - Emotional and spiritual support for the patient and family

Best for: Seniors with advanced illness who want comfort-focused care rather than aggressive treatment.



Signs Your Loved One May Benefit from Home Care

Consider non-medical home care when you notice: - Increasing falls or fear of falling - Skipping meals or relying on snacks only - Wearing the same clothes for days - Isolation: rarely leaving home or seeing friends - Family caregivers feeling exhausted, overwhelmed, or burned out

Home care can provide an extra set of hands and eyes to keep your loved one safe and supported.

Signs Your Loved One May Need Home Health

Talk to a healthcare provider about home health if you notice: - Recent hospitalization or emergency room visit - New or worsening wounds - Shortness of breath, chest pain, or swelling in legs/feet - Frequent medication changes or difficulty managing complex medications - Noticeable weakness after illness or surgery

Home health requires a doctor's order and focuses on medical needs.

Signs It May Be Time to Consider Hospice

Consider a hospice evaluation when: - There have been multiple hospitalizations or ER visits in the past 6–12 months - Your loved one is losing weight without trying and eating much less - They are spending most of the day in bed or a chair - Pain or other symptoms are hard to control - Treatments are no longer helping, or your loved one is tired of going to the hospital

A hospice evaluation does not mean you are “giving up”—it means you are exploring comfort-focused support.



Helping Older & Younger Generations Connect

The holidays are a perfect time to build bridges between generations.

Simple, Low-Stress Activities

- **Story time:** Ask your loved one to share holiday memories, traditions, or “what life was like when you were a kid.”
- **Photo sharing:** Look through old photo albums together; have kids ask questions about people and places.
- **Recipe traditions:** Bake a favorite family recipe together. Let the senior give instructions while younger ones do the heavy work.
- **Music moments:** Play favorite songs from your loved one’s era. Let kids pick a song too and have a mini “concert.”
- **Crafts:** Simple ornament-making, card-writing, or decorating cookies.

Conversation Starters for Kids & Teens

- “What was your favorite holiday when you were my age?”
- “Did you have a favorite toy or game growing up?”
- “What’s one thing you’re proud of in your life?”
- “What’s a tradition you hope we keep going?”

Tips for Success

- Keep activities short and flexible.
- Avoid putting your loved one on the spot; invite, don’t pressure.
- Offer seating that’s comfortable and safe.
- Have a quiet space available if your loved one needs a break.



Taking Care of Yourself as a Family Caregiver

You cannot pour from an empty cup. During the holidays: - Say “yes” only to what truly matters; it’s okay to simplify traditions. - Ask for help with specific tasks (meals, rides, sitting with your loved one). - Schedule your own rest, even if it’s 10–15 minutes at a time. - Notice your own warning signs: irritability, exhaustion, tears, or feeling numb.

If you are feeling overwhelmed, it may be time to bring in extra support at home.

Next Steps

If this holiday season raises concerns about your loved one’s safety or independence: - Write down the changes you’ve noticed. - Share them with your loved one’s doctor. - Explore whether non-medical home care, home health, or hospice might help.

You don’t have to navigate this alone. Support is available—for your loved one, and for you.



MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY HOLIDAYS!



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or Book Online

🌐 In-Home Evaluation

🌐 Virtual Meeting via Zoom