

# Dementia Care at Christmas



Make the most of Christmas and the holidays if you're looking after a loved one with dementia.

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- How will they cope? How will we cope?
- Will they enjoy themselves?
- How do I prepare the family – kids, siblings to be more patient?
- Will I have any dramas?

Caring for someone with dementia over Christmas and the holiday season when there is noise, activity and different people, needs planning ahead. Don't try and "go with the flow" when it comes to someone with dementia.

Different faces, people they may not remember, and noise may trigger aggression and fear, so planning ahead to make them feel safe and comfortable will help the day along so that everyone enjoys themselves.

As experienced carers of people with dementia, we have compiled a few tips to help you through Christmas and New Year so that you can make the most of this time with your family, and so that everyone can enjoy it.

## **Familiarity is important**

Create a sense of familiarity for them. Have some photo albums handy on the coffee table, put some nibbles out that they often enjoy, have a cushion they have always used on the chair where they sit. Items that are familiar to them will make them feel they're in a safe place so that they remain relaxed.



If you can, sit them next to a window where there is subtle natural light, so they can see outside while sitting in a comfortable chair.

## **Have a quieter room for some respite**

People with dementia are easily overwhelmed by noise. If you know there will be many people in your home on Christmas Day, have a room set aside with some books, magazines, photo albums and a comfortable sitting place. Then they can escape to this room whenever they need to.

## **Put on calming music (for everyone not just the person with dementia)**

Music is a powerful medium that can change an atmosphere very quickly. Use music to help you, your loved one with dementia as well as everyone else in the room.

Christmas carols are great during the festive season, maybe choose the smoother tones of the old-fashioned crooners like Frank Sinatra and Bing Crosby, who will be familiar to them. Add relaxing music to the playlist such as classics by Mozart which are known to have calming effects and stimulate conversation and creativity at the same time.



## Share the care

Reach out and share the responsibility of caring for a loved one with dementia. Include your visitors where appropriate in the care role. You can also include your children by asking them to spend fifteen minutes reading a book to them, looking through photo albums, playing a simple game or watching a movie.

## Take them for a walk for fresh air

Taking 15 minutes on Christmas day to go for a short walk will help them relax, get some fresh air and a break from the noise. Arrange this in advance with someone else if you are too busy.

## Involve them in your activities

Keep them involved in the day's activities. Ask them to do some simple chores like fold the napkins, place Christmas decorations or whatever you think they may be happy to do. A little bit of thinking ahead here will ensure they feel part of the festivities (and then they can opt out to the respite room when they need some time out).

## Communicate with your guests ahead of time

Send a message to the people who will be gathering on Christmas day and ask them to show more patience and care for the person with dementia. Let them know that they may ask the same questions again and again, that they have a memory issue and may not remember faces

and that they may feel overwhelmed and become fearful. But not to worry as all this can be handled with patience and a little but more care.

You can also refer them to the Dementia Australia website which has information about being with people who have dementia and contributing to creating a more dementia friendly environment for everyone. <https://www.dementia.org.au/information>

## Are you planning to go away for a few days and concerned about dementia care for a loved one?

The dementia care team at St Louis are here to help you. While you are away we can look after your loved one and provide some extra help:

- We will provide transport to and from places
- We can arrange to check in on your loved one over the time you are away
- We can arrange overnight care if required
- We can spend time with them and take them out for a social activity.

Call St Louis Home Care in Adelaide on 8332 0950 or St Louis Victor Harbor Home Care on 8552 1481 to discuss our dementia care support at home and how we can help you get through the Christmas holiday season with as much good cheer as possible!

**Call St Louis Home Care to discuss any of your home care needs.**

**Adelaide Metro & Hills 8332 0950  
Victor Harbor & Fleurieu 8552 1481**

