

Tips for Visiting Friends or Loved Ones In Nursing and Assisted Living Home During the Holidays

During the holiday season our thoughts often turn to visiting friends or loved ones in nursing homes. The visits while strongly recommended by those involved in health care and aging are sometimes very emotional.

Arizona Department of Health Services recommends that Arizonians who visit relatives or friends during the holidays should first plan ahead to make their visits rewarding for both the residents and themselves. The following tips should be considered when visiting a long-term care facility:

How to get the most out of a visit

- Check the visiting hours beforehand. If your schedule does not allow you to visit during regular hours, contact the nursing facility social worker or administrator. Do not show up unannounced or just “drop by.”
- Call ahead to the facility to inquire if the resident needs any personal items, clothing or other necessities.
- Arrange a time when the visit will not interfere with meals or medications.
- Let the facility know if you want to share a meal with the resident.
- Inquire about pet visits and limitations. Many residents have “roommates” who may be allergic to animals.
- Children of all ages are generally welcome. Young children rarely react negatively to nursing home residents, but teenagers and older children may need time to adjust.
- Specialized care units may have different visiting hours and regulations. Always call first.
- Always consider including the resident in holiday meals at home and other outings.

If you are visiting for the first time, give yourself a chance to adjust. The surroundings are perceived differently by you more than they are to your friend or relative. Ask the Manager or administrator what to expect.

Most of all, be supportive of the resident and his/her decisions. Consider engaging in activities that are both stimulating and productive.

Things to do when visiting a nursing home resident

- Attend an activity at the facility together
- Take a walk, either inside or outside
- Watch a favorite TV show together
- Read to the resident from a favorite book or magazine
- Reminisce or work on a photo album together
- Write Letters or cards together. As people age, handwriting becomes more difficult and less legible. Help with clear addresses on postcards or envelopes.
- Record, either on videotape or audio, the resident’s remembrances. You will look back on these moments and cherish them.

Most of all enjoy your time with the resident. Remember – this can be beneficial for both of you, and most importantly, the short time you spend will be cherished for a long time afterward by the resident.

If you have a cold or have flu symptoms, please refrain from visiting at this time, due to the vulnerability of your loved ones and other residents.