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Helping your Residents through the Holiday Season

For most of us, the holidays are a time of happiness, laughter, and festivities with our friends and family. However, for some, especially residents of assisted living facilities, the holidays can be a difficult time. During the holidays, they may feel more acutely the passage of time and the absence of loved ones. In the absence of traditions and past holiday rituals, seniors may find the season to be devoid of meaning. As caregivers, there are a number of things that you can do to help make this time more enjoyable and prevent the holiday blues.

Decorate:

Decorating for the season can really help your residents get into the spirit. Try to involve them in the process as much as possible. Give those that are able small tasks to manage. Coordinate craft events to create their own ornaments. Encourage decorating in their personal spaces and assist them in creating a warm and special atmosphere.

Music:

Holiday music is great for setting the mood. Whether by CD, iPod, or piano, a good Christmas carol will help to create a positive and festive environment. Consider reaching out to local churches or choir groups about coming in to do a small performance for your residents. The more people spreading cheer through music the better. Many people find comfort in music and your residents will enjoy the visitors.

Stay Connected:

Help your residents to stay connected with their loved ones. Hold a holiday brunch or open house to encourage family and friends to visit with residents. If you have residents that do not have close family, offer a Skype or Facetime call with those that are not close by in order to reunite them during this festive time. You can also offer to help residents send cards to those that may be in another state. Anything that you can do to help remind your residents that they are loved is going to be of assistance.

Festive Foods:

Offer holiday favorites at meal times to induce a sense of normalcy. Pumpkin pie or Eggnog may seem like a small thing, but it could help your residents to relive those happy family get-togethers of the past. Just make sure to keep dietary restrictions in mind. Try searching for low sodium and diabetic recipes of holiday dishes. There are plenty of recipes that would allow you to offer a fresh baked treat to your resident without jeopardizing their health.

Outings:

This option may not be possible for all residents. However, if they are able, taking residents to a nativity play, a holiday concert, church service, or just to look at Christmas lights may help to make them feel excited about the holiday season. If your residents cannot travel, consider having your own event to get the holiday spirits flowing. Local children's choirs or churches may be willing to come to your facility to perform for the residents. If all else fails, you may want to put on a little performance with your staff.

Your residents just want to have a good time, feel involved and connected to others, and be reminded of why they value the holidays. Offering the things that they may have had at home will help make the season a little brighter. Bring the decorations, music, food, and people that they love to them. If you do these things, you will be able to assist your residents in having a successful holiday season and a happy start to the New Year.

Check Out SIUPrem's New App!

One of our leading finance companies, SIUPREM Inc., recently released a mobile app. The free app allows you to check the account status and make payments directly from an Apple or Droid device.

If your premium is financed through SIUprem, make sure you login to your app store today and search SIUPrem.

Do's and Don'ts for Holiday Decorating with Alzheimer's or Dementia Residents

Do Clear the Path!

Seniors with Alzheimer's disease or Dementia already experience problems with balance and an increased fall risk. So as you decorate, be sure to keep the pathways clear to minimize risk.

Don't Over-Stimulate!

Those residents living with Dementia or Alzheimer's can easily be agitated by too much noise or overstimulation. Make sure to have a quiet area set up for those residents to prevent them from becoming overwhelmed and increasing a risk of wandering or other risky behaviors.

Do Avoid Animated Décor!

Although festive and fun for most of us, a person with Alzheimer's or Dementia may find the flashing lights, movement, and sound of animated decorations disorienting or even frightening. It is best to avoid these types of decorations or at least limit them to areas that your residents do not access.

Don't Decorate with Faux Food!

Ornaments that look like sugary fruit or gingerbread men may confuse an Alzheimer's resident and create a risk for choking or poisoning. Avoid any decorations that look good enough to eat because they just might try.

Do Offer Empathy!

The holidays may be a difficult time for those with Dementia or Alzheimer's as they deal with the confusion and disorientation. Some residents may have a difficult time with any decorations and may require some special consideration. You may need to take some decorations down if they are too much for your residents, or not decorate at all. What is most important is the health and well-being of your residents, and your empathy will go a long way in helping them through the season.

*"It is so important as a caregiver not to become so enmeshed in the role that you lose yourself.
It's neither good for you nor your loved one."*

– Dana Reeve

Meet our Team!

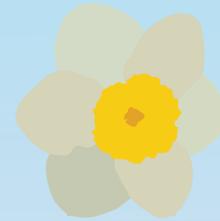


Harmony Reina
Account Manager

Harmony Reina has 7 years experience in the insurance industry and is a certified massage therapist. She enjoys spending her time away from work with her sons and family. Her favorite days growing up were spent at her neighbor's farm helping to feed and take care of the animals. Today she provides a home to two cats, a dog, and two fish. Harmony works in our Animal Welfare division and helps our PCALIC division when our account managers are out of the office.

Fun Facts About December!

Fact 1- The birthstone for December is Turquoise.



Fact 2 -The birth flower for December is the Narcissus.

Fact 3 -Poinsettia Day, National Chocolate Day, National Read a New Book Month, National Stress Free Family Month, and Universal Human Rights Month.

What You Need to Know About Flu

Did you get your flu shot (or nasal spray) yet? If not, there's not a moment to lose since we're now on the threshold of the peak season. But even if you do get it, you still could be infected. Or maybe you're one of those people who refuse to have a shot because you'd prefer to tough it out. Whichever category you're in, here's what you need to know about risks and treatment:

- There are four main variants of the virus this season but some shots protect only against the three most likely risks.
- The vaccine is not 100 percent effective but getting a shot makes you 60 percent less likely to need treatment.
- If you had a shot last season, you still need another one now.
- Pregnancy puts you at greater risk of flu infection. The Department of Health (DOH) says you should get the shot (but not a nasal spray or gel vaccine).
- It takes about two weeks after your vaccination for it to offer maximum protection.
- You should delay getting your shot if you're currently sick with a fever.
- You can't catch flu from the vaccine, but...
- Some people experience mild side effects after being vaccinated – including headaches, fever, nausea, muscle pain, and runny nose. Adolescents may suffer a faint.
- Serious side effects, like high fever and breathing difficulties, are rare and usually occur swiftly.
- If you didn't get your shot in time and/or develop flu:
 - * If the symptoms are mild, stay home and avoid contact with others (except those providing medical help if you need it).
 - * If the symptoms are more acute or the person is in a high risk group (e.g. children and over 65s) contact a health care provider immediately.
 - * If the patient has emergency symptoms like breathing difficulties, bluish skin, dehydration, unresponsiveness, or a rash with fever, go to the emergency room.

Vaccines should be available everywhere by now. The DOH recommends everyone 6 months and older should be vaccinated unless they are allergic to chicken eggs or have previously suffered a severe reaction. If you're not sure about locations, use this online search service: <http://flushot.healthmap.org/>

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Return Service Requested

Wishing You...

Happy Holidays

