

Loved one with Alzheimer's? Make this July 4 'dementia friendly'

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A holiday filled with loud noises can be upsetting for people who have Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, but it's possible to create a Fourth of July celebration that works for everyone.

"Being proactive, prepared and adaptable are the best ways caregivers can create a dementia-friendly Fourth of July for their loved ones," said Jennifer Reeder, director of educational and [social services](#) for the Alzheimer's Foundation of America.

In preparation for the nation's 246th birthday, Reeder offered several [dementia](#)-friendly [holiday](#) ideas:

Skip the fireworks. Adapt this tradition by watching a fireworks display on TV.

Stay inside. Keep your loved one indoors at all times if they are likely to hear fireworks. But be prepared that the noise may make its way inside, causing anxiety, fear and agitation. Explain in

advance what will be happening and tone down some of the noise with soothing background sounds from a white noise machine or air conditioner. Playing favorite music may be consoling, as may items that provide comfort, such as a blanket or article of clothing.

Check in or get help. If your loved one lives with you, check in on him or her during the night because [fireworks](#) noise often doesn't stop at bedtime. If they live alone, consider asking a trusted relative or friend to stay with them or hire a home caregiver for the night.

Go small. Keep any holiday gatherings small because large crowds can be disorienting and create anxiety. Name tags for everyone may help the person with dementia.

Stick to routine. Keep routines as normal as possible, including meals, naps and bedtime. Lunchtime celebrations are best for people with [Alzheimer's](#), because "[sundowning](#)" (when Alzheimer patients have trouble with fading daylight) can cause restlessness, agitation, irritability or confusion.

Have fun together. Do fun activities together, including creating patriotic decorations with your loved one, playing or singing familiar patriotic music, baking holiday-themed desserts, or compiling a family album with pictures of past July Fourth celebrations. These types of activities can be mentally stimulating and foster creative expression.

"Celebrating Independence Day can still be a fun, enjoyable experience for families impacted by dementia-related illnesses by making the proper adaptations," Reeder said in a foundation news release.

More information: The [Alzheimer's Foundation of America](#) has a toll-free helpline at 866-232-8484.

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