

Travel and Holidays

People with dementia travelling alone

Travelling alone can be difficult even for people with early-stage dementia. They may be worried about getting lost in unfamiliar places or coping if there is a problem such as a cancelled train or plane. However, many people with dementia do travel alone successfully – particularly if they're used to travelling.

Letting people know you need help

If you are planning on staying with family or friends, you should be honest about any help you might need, for example with dressing, eating, or going to the toilet. Remember you will be out of your usual routine and in unfamiliar surroundings, so may need more help than you would at home.

Helpcard

Alzheimer Scotland has a card for people with dementia to use to help people who serve the public to understand their special needs. You can show this to transport staff as well as in shops, etc. You can call the 24 hour Freephone Dementia Helpline on 0808 808 3000 to order a free Helpcard.

Journey Assistance Cards

You can download a 'First Group' safe journey card to use if you travel by bus or train. This is a ticket shaped card that you can print off to show the driver or conductor to discreetly ask for assistance or patience when boarding or leaving. There are pre-printed cards with requests on them such as: "Please wait until I sit down before driving off"; "I have difficulty speaking"; "I have difficulty hearing" and so on, plus a blank one for you to fill in yourself. www.firstbus.co.uk/uploads/node_images/Extra-Help-To-Travel-journey-assistance-cards-june-20-v2.pdf

Air travel

Planning ahead

It is very important that you let the airline know what help you will need well in advance of your flight. According to the airlines, most people who travel with a 'permanent or stable condition' will not require medical clearance, but you should check and make sure at the time of booking what, if any, medical information is required. Remember – even for flights within the UK photo ID is required. Check with individual airlines first, but acceptable identification generally includes:

- a current UK passport (an expired passport can be used on domestic flights for up to five years after expiry)
- a valid photographic driving licence (full or provisional)
- a Citizen Card
- a valid Government-issued identity card
- a SMART card
- a National Entitlement Card.

Following the UK's exit from the EU, EEA, Swiss national identity cards are no longer valid for travel to the United Kingdom. You will be required to use a passport.

People with more advanced dementia may not be advised to travel alone. Airline staff are not trained to assist a passenger who has nursing requirements or other medical needs. To help you get the assistance you need at the airport and on the plane, you may need to complete a form called an Incapacitated Passengers Handling Advice (INCAD). Check with your travel agent or the airline if this will be necessary. British Airways advises that you contact their Passenger Medical Clearances Unit (PMCU) before booking, as they would be able to advise whether they would allow a person with dementia on the flight. The PMCU offers a free advisory service to doctors, other healthcare professionals and passengers in relation to flying on all British Airways flights. Final clearance can often be provided over the phone but if further information is needed, your doctor will be asked to complete a 'Medif' form.

The Medif form is available through your travel agent or British Airways by calling 020 8738 5444 or downloading from www.britishairways.com/cms/global/pdfs/health/BA_Medical_Information_Form.pdf

At the airport

Always let the airline know if you will need help at the airport, such as with getting from the car park, railway station or taxi stand to the terminal. If the airline cannot do this, contact the airport information desk and ask what assistance they can provide. Services which may be available include assistance with:

- registration to check-in
- proceeding to the gate
- boarding and disembarking
- stowing baggage

Accessibility on individual airlines

Most airlines offer a pre bookable 'Special Assistance' service, however there are many airlines, and the amount of extra support varies. Alternatively, you can simply request a Hidden Disability Lanyard and this will identify that you may need some extra assistance or consideration as you make your way through the airport.

On the plane

When you are on the plane you will need to be able to manage by yourself or have a companion/escort with you. The airline cabin staff cannot offer special medical, feeding or continence assistance. British Airways can provide an escort for someone travelling alone, however the person travelling would have to pay for the escort's fare.

Rail travel

All rail companies provide assistance for passengers. Contact the company in advance and they will make sure that you are met at the departure station and escorted onto the appropriate train. If you need to change trains, they will also take you to the connecting train.

How to request assistance via Passenger Assist

There are a number of ways to request assistance.

In May 2021, Passenger Assistance by Transreport was introduced – an app which allows you to request assistance via an internet-enabled smartphone. You receive a confirmation email once your request has been checked and confirmed. You can find out more about the app on our **Passenger Assistance by Transreport page**.

You can also call for free on **0800 0223720** or **text 60083**.

Simply tell them the journey you are planning on taking, and they will connect you to the appropriate train company to confirm your booking request.

For text and textphone they will send an instant SMS with the number you need to dial from your textphone unit.

If you have any queries on or issues with your assistance booking, you can get in contact with the relevant train company by using the **Train company contact details** below.

Train Company contact details

<https://www.nationalrail.co.uk/help-and-assistance/passenger-assist/>

Make sure you contact the rail companies at least 2 hours in advance of your journey to organise the help you will need. It is good practice to organise this a while in advance and to confirm the day before that this is in place properly. Also ensure that you have organised the assistance you will need for the return journey.

Eurostar

www.eurostar.com/uk-en/travel-info/travel-planning/accessibility

Eurostar passengers can access a complimentary assistance service for passengers with special needs who are travelling to continental Europe. They recommend pre-booking special assistance no matter where you are travelling from or to, this must be done at least 48 hours before departure by calling **+44 03432 186 186** and choosing option 4. Tell them about your special needs and they will confirm your booking. Please remember that you need a valid UK passport for travelling abroad.

At stations with Eurostar Assist (please check the station you are travelling from and to as not all stations have this and if not, you have to pre book as above) you can turn up on the day without a booking. You'll need to arrive at the meeting point 75 minutes before your train departs and they will help you from there.

Disabled Person's Railcard

You can get cheaper train travel with a Railcard. They give you 1/3 off most journeys for a year.

Disabled Railcard

This gives you, plus someone travelling with you 1/3 off. To qualify you must meet the eligibility criteria **www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk/are-you-eligible**

You are eligible for the Disabled Persons Railcard if you:

- receive Personal Independence Payments (PIP)
- receive Disability Living Allowance (DLA) at either:
 - the higher or lower rate for the mobility component, or
 - the higher or middle rate for the care component
- have a visual impairment
- have a hearing impairment
- have epilepsy
- receive Attendance Allowance or Severe Disablement Allowance
- receive War Pensioner's Mobility Supplement
- receive War or Service Disablement Pension for 80% or more disability
- buy or lease a vehicle through the Motability scheme

As well as being able to apply online, you can download a Disabled Persons Railcard application form or collect an application form from any staffed station ticket office. You will then need to complete and return this application, along with the required proof of disability and payment to:

National Railcards
PO Box 10776
Ashby-de-la-Zouch
LE65 9FA

Senior Railcard

This gives you 1/3 off most train fares. To qualify you must be over 60 and provide proof of age www.senior-railcard.co.uk

Ferry or cruise ship travel

You will need to let the ferry or cruise ship operator know what assistance you will need for the journey. They can then advise if you need to have a companion/ escort and whether you will need medical clearance for the journey.

Coach travel

If you need help getting on and off the coach or any other help, let the coach company know when you book your ticket. You will be responsible for seeing your luggage on and off the bus; however, the driver should assist with actually putting the baggage onto the bus. Take all valuables, tickets and medication onto the bus with you for security. If you need wheelchair access there are a number of specialist companies who offer UK and European coach holidays with fully accessible vehicles. Travel agents might have this information but, if not, contact Tourism for All UK for information on these companies.

Scotland-wide Free Bus Travel Scheme

The Scottish Government provides free or subsidised bus and train travel to older (60+) and disabled people across Scotland – proof of age or disability is required. The scheme allows for free bus travel throughout Scotland and across the border to Berwick-upon-Tweed and Carlisle. It also gives those based in Shetland, Orkney and the Western Isles two free return journeys to the mainland per year. For more information call Transport Scotland on 0141 272 7100 or follow the link below

www.transport.gov.scot/concessionary-travel/60plus-or-disabled

Going abroad

Passports

For travelling outside the UK you will need a valid passport. Application forms are available at Post Offices or you can phone the 24/7 application request line on **0300 222 0000** to be sent one by post. Calls to this number are charged at your network provider's national rate. You can also apply online and have the partially completed form returned to you for checking and inclusion of the supporting documents, photos and fees, at: www.gov.uk/apply-renew-passport Some post offices provide a 'Check and Send' service both for new passports and renewals. For a handling charge they will:

- check that your application form has been filled in correctly
- check that you have included all the supporting documents and the correct fee, and forward all the relevant paperwork plus your payment.

Passport applications sent via the Check and Send service are usually processed more quickly than standard postal applications. They generally provide two options Digital Check & Send and Paper Check & Send and are much less likely to be returned and/or delayed because of queries. You can also get advice and guidance on filling in passport forms directly from the UK passport office call centre on **0300 222 0000**.

European/Global Health Insurance Card

There are 2 types of cover available.

- A UK Global Health Insurance Card (UK GHIC)
- A UK European Health Insurance Card (UK EHIC), if you have rights under the Withdrawal Agreement.

For most people, the UK Global Health Insurance Card (UK GHIC) replaces the existing European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) for new applications. A UK GHIC and new UK EHIC are free of charge. Beware of unofficial websites, they may charge you a fee to apply.

If you have an existing EHIC, it will remain valid until the expiry date on the card, you can apply for a new card up to 6 months before your current card expires.

An EHIC or GHIC card entitles you to free or reduced-cost necessary medical treatment while you're in an EU country or Switzerland.

What does the EHIC/GHIC card cover?

Medically necessary healthcare which means healthcare that cannot reasonably wait until you come back to the UK. Whether treatment is necessary is decided by the healthcare provider in the country you're visiting.

Medically necessary healthcare includes things like:

- emergency treatment and visits to A&E
- treatment for a long-term or pre-existing medical condition
- routine medical care for pre-existing conditions that need monitoring
- routine maternity care, as long as you're not going abroad to give birth
- oxygen therapy and kidney dialysis

You'll need to pre-arrange some treatments with the relevant healthcare provider in the country you're visiting – for example, kidney dialysis or chemotherapy.

Check the Foreign Office country guides on GOV.UK for information on how to access treatment in the country you're visiting.

Not all state healthcare is free within the EU and Switzerland and so you may have to pay for services that you would get for free on the NHS.

The EHIC/GHIC is normally valid for five years and covers any necessary medical treatment during your trip, due to illness or an accident. The card gives access to state-provided medical treatment only, and you'll be treated on the same basis as an 'insured' person living in the country you're visiting. This might not cover all the things you'd expect to get free of charge from the NHS in the UK. You may have to make a contribution to the cost of your care. You are advised to take out comprehensive private insurance for visits to all countries, regardless of whether you are covered by your EHIC/GHIC.

Applying for a GHIC card

Applying online – <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/apply-for-a-free-uk-global-health-insurance-card-ghic/>

Before you apply, you will need to have the following information to hand for everyone you are applying for:

- name and date of birth
- Your National Insurance Number
- your Community Health Index (CHI) number, NHS number (England) or Health and Care number (Northern Ireland)

To apply by phone: call **0845 606 2030** and have the information listed above ready. When your application is completed, your card will be delivered within 10 days. To apply by post: pick up the GHIC form from the Post Office. Your card will be delivered within 21 days. For a nominal fee, the Post Office will check your completed application form and forward it for processing.

Travel insurance

Make sure you have an insurance policy that covers you for all your medical conditions. Some policies do not cover claims arising from a 'pre-existing medical condition or defect', which could mean that any illness or accident linked to dementia may not be covered. This may mean that the premium will be increased, so shop around if you can.

It might be worthwhile talking to your GP before buying health insurance. The health declarations are very detailed and require information on conditions and medications going back years. These details will all be checked if you later try to make a claim. Any omissions or mistakes you make can be used as grounds to refuse your claim.

These insurance companies provide cover for people with pre-existing conditions:

- **All Clear Travel Insurance**
0800 848 8608
www.allcleartravel.co.uk
- **Able2Travel**
01483 806 826
www.able2travel.com
- **Freespirit**
02392 419 080
www.freespirittravelinsurance.com
- **It's So Easy Travel Insurance**
01223 785 513
www.itssoeasytravelinsurance.com
- **Making Insurance Accessible**
0800 999 3333
www.miatravelinsurance.co.uk
- **Howden**
01993 894700
www.howdeninsurance.co.uk/personal/travel/

- **P J Hayman & Company Ltd**
0300 094 5786
www.pjhayman.com
- **Pulse Travel Insurance**
0300 094 5786
www.pulse-insurance.co.uk

Benefits and holidays

Carer's Allowance

If you receive Carer's Allowance you can take a total of four weeks break in any 26 week period for holidays. Carer's Allowance may also continue throughout periods when you or the person you care for goes into hospital. You must tell the Carer's Allowance Unit if you take a break from caring due to a holiday, or another reason, such as going into hospital, or if the person you are caring for goes on holiday or into hospital.

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) or Attendance Allowance

PIP if you are aged 16 or over and have not reached State Pension age. Attendance Allowance if you're State Pension age or older and do not get DLA

If your stay abroad is temporary, including a holiday, you can usually continue getting these benefits for up to 13 week. You may be able to continue getting these benefits for longer if you are going abroad for medical treatment for your illness or disability but your stay must still be temporary.

Carers and holidays

Caring for someone with dementia is often very hard work. Taking a break from caring is very important to allow you to rest, relax and recharge your batteries. No matter how much you love someone, caring for them all the time without a break now and then is unlikely to be good for either person.

Sometimes carers feel guilty about the idea of having a holiday, especially if they are considering going away without the person with dementia but it is extremely important to look after yourself as well. If you run yourself into the ground, your own health is likely to suffer, and affect your ability to look after someone else.

You may find it helpful to talk over your feelings about taking a holiday, perhaps with friends or relatives, or completely confidentially on the 24 hour Freephone Dementia Helpline on **0808 808 3000**.

Holidays with the person you care for

Going on holiday with the person you care for can allow you both to have a change from your usual routine.

Where you can go will depend on what help the person with dementia needs. Often ordinary hotels and guest houses will be very happy to welcome you, as long as you make contact in advance and ask them if they could cope with any special needs the person has. However, they will be unlikely to be able to offer very much help.

However, people with dementia can become confused and upset by a change of environment. It may be very difficult for them to learn the way around a new place and get used to unfamiliar people. This may mean that you do not get to enjoy your holiday as you have to provide extra support for the person. You should bear in mind that even someone who is quite independent at home may need more supervision in an unfamiliar place.

Try not to choose a holiday that means a lot of travelling, or one where you are doing the housework or catering, as that will be no rest for you. It is often a good idea to book a holiday out of season, as staff will be likely to be less busy, and to be able to give you more attention. If you can take someone else with you as a helper it's likely that you'll enjoy the holiday more.

Holidays without the person you care for

Going on holiday without the person you care for allows you to have a proper break from caring and get some alone time, however you will have to organise alternative care for the person with dementia.

Community care

Under community care arrangements, you can ask your local social work department to assess the needs of the person with dementia. This includes the need for a holiday or respite care. If they assess the person with dementia as needing a holiday, they have a legal duty to provide one – under section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act.

They will charge for this according to the person's income. If the social work department assess the person with dementia as needing respite care they should provide it, but they are not legally obliged to do so. They will charge for respite care according to the person's income.

If the social work department does not agree that a holiday or respite is necessary, you can ask them to review the assessment, or make a complaint.

Care at home

You may be able to put together a package of care at home with extra time or visits from home helps, care attendant schemes (such as Crossroads) and the health visitor or district nurse. Ask the social work department about this.

Often the simplest is to ask a relative, friend or neighbour to look after the person. They may move in or call in as often as necessary and perhaps see to things like meals or shopping.

If no one is available, you may be able to pay someone; perhaps someone with experience as a care attendant or a nurse. You can ask around to see if anyone can recommend someone suitable.

Another alternative is to advertise locally. If you do this, it is very important to interview the applicants and to take up references. A nursing agency will be able to provide people who should be experienced; but this can be an expensive option. Again, it is important to take up references.

If you are employing someone to care for the person with dementia, you should make the arrangements in advance so that they can get to know each other before you go. You should put in writing what is expected and how much you have agreed to pay. Make sure you leave written information on what they need to know about the house and appliances, the local shops and the person with dementia's normal routines.

Care away from home – respite breaks

Many local authority and private sector care homes provide respite breaks, although there may be charges for both. Short term admissions are available in local authority residential homes. Contact your social work area office to find out about this. Home support schemes may be extended to give overnight or weekend care as part of a package of care organised through a care manager.

If the person with dementia needs help with the costs of respite care in a residential nursing home, you should contact your local social work department who will arrange to assess your relative's needs. If he or she is assessed as needing respite care, the social work department should arrange this. The cost will depend on the income of the person with dementia.

For a list of care homes in your area, or to read inspection reports contact the Care Inspectorate **0345 600 9527** or visit their website www.careinspectorate.com

There is a searchable database of care homes, including those which provide short breaks at [**www.bettercaring.com**](http://www.bettercaring.com)

Financial help

It may be possible to get some financial help towards your holiday. It is a good idea to start applying well in advance. It may also be possible to use part of a Self-Directed Support budget towards a holiday. Speak to your local social work team for more information.

Social work departments

Social work departments may be able to help towards the cost of a holiday if you and the person with dementia haven't had one for several years. However, their funds for this are often limited.

Charities

Some charities offer help towards the cost of a holiday, and perhaps towards the cost of taking a helper.

There is a book called A Guide to Grants for Individuals in Need (18th edition, 2024/25, £135.00) which lists most of these charities; it is available in every Citizens Advice Bureau, or in libraries. This book also provides a model of how to make an effective application and advice on sourcing the type of funding to apply to. It may also be purchased from the Directory of Social Change website - www.dsc.org.uk

Tourism for All UK can provide you with information on which charities to try. Your relative may be eligible for help from a specific charity because of a former occupation, trade union membership, connection with the armed forces, religion or ethnic background, or where they have lived or worked.

Counsel and Care can also advise you on finding money towards the cost of care for the person with dementia at home.

Useful addresses

- **Care Commission**

Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee, DD1 4NY
0345 600 9527

www.careinspectorate.com

- **Crossroads (Scotland)**

Crossroads (Scotland) – Caring for Carers
24 George Square
Glasgow, G2 1EG
0141 226 3793

www.crossroads-scotland.co.uk

- **Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC)**

c/o Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London, SW1P 4DR
dptac.enquiries@dft.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disabled-persons-transport-advisorycommittee

- **National Benevolent Fund for the Aged**

32 Buckingham Palace Road
London
SW1W 0RE

www.nbfa.org.uk

- **Shared Care Scotland**

Unit 2, Dunfermline Business Centre
Izatt Avenue
Dunfermline, KY11 3BX
01383 622462

www.sharedcarescotland.com

- **Tourism for All UK**

PO Box 318
Wirral
CH32 9GG
info@tourismforall.org.uk
0845 124 9971

www.tourismforall.org.uk

Specialist holidays

- **Revitalise**

0303 303 0145

www.revitalise.org.uk

Checklist for travelling abroad

At least six weeks before you travel	
Speak to your GP:	
Discuss whether you need to take any extra health precautions (e.g. vaccinations, anti-malarial tablets) for the country you are visiting.	
Make sure you have enough medication for the duration of your trip.	
Ask for a letter about your medication and a copy of your prescription which you can show to customs officers if you are visiting a country with strict drug controls.	
Find out whether any health issues (e.g. diabetes, obesity, recent surgery) will put you at increased risk of deep vein thrombosis (DVT) during and after air travel.	
Identify any information you would need to disclose on an application for travel insurance.	
Check entry requirement for the country you are visiting e.g. vaccinations, masks, forms to complete.	
Organise your paperwork:	
Check that your passport is still valid for a minimum of 6 months at return date.	
Make sure that you have a Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) if you're travelling within the EU or Switzerland and that all vaccinations are up to date.	
Get adequate and comprehensive travel insurance.	
Order foreign currency, currency card or traveller's cheques and make sure your credit cards are valid.	
Check the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) up-to-date travel advice and travellers' tips.	
Check if you need a visa – your travel agent should be able to advise.	
Check with your mobile service provider whether it will work abroad and how much it will cost.	
A week before you travel	
Make two copies of a personal informal sheet, including: your passport number, insurance policy, ticket details, itinerary, traveller's cheque numbers, credit card emergency numbers, home and away contact details. Keep one and give the other to friends or family for emergencies.	
Postpone regular deliveries, for example newspapers, milk or groceries.	
Check your buildings and contents insurance is up-to-date and let your insurers know if your house will be unoccupied for more than two weeks.	
Let a friend or neighbour know that you will be away and ask them to make sure the house is secure in your absence.	
If using bank debit or credit card, advise bank that you will be away, for how long and to which country.	

Packing:	
Check your ticket for the weight restrictions for checked-in luggage and weight and size restrictions for hand luggage.	
Check with the airport for items you're not allowed to pack.	
Remove any old airline tags and make sure your luggage is labelled inside and out with your name, contact details and destination address (avoid putting your home address on the outside label – use an e-mail or mobile phone number instead).	
Attach something bright on your luggage that will enable you to identify it at a distance, for example a ribbon, coloured tape or a large sticker.	
In your hand luggage you should have:	
Passport and visa (if necessary).	
Tickets	
Contact details for your destination	
Contact details for your friends and family at home	
Currency/credit cards/traveller's cheques	
Small denomination currency for arrival/on board plane	
Insurance certificate and emergency contact details	
Inoculation certificates	
Any medication you might need and accompanying doctor's note	
Driving licence if you are hiring a car	
COVID passport/Masks if required	