

## TAKING A RESIDENT SHOPPING

### Let's Talk Care

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For many people, a shopping trip can be a real boost to the spirits -- especially for residents of nursing homes whose poor health doesn't permit them as many opportunities to take a break from their day-to-day routine. A shopping trip engages all five senses and helps people feel a sense of community and belonging. It's also a pleasant way to visit with family and friends.

Unrealistic expectations, however, sometimes get in the way of an enjoyable outing. Older people may move slowly and take time deciding what to buy. Younger people may be impatient, or may want to help by making all the decisions.

Here are some tips to keep the fun in shopping.

- Let the nursing home know ahead of time that you're planning an outing so that staff can make sure the resident is ready. Also, please let staff know approximately what time you will return.
- Plan the outing for the resident's best time of day. Some people have more energy in the morning, some in the afternoon. Ask the nursing home staff for help in deciding what time would be best.
- Schedule the shopping trip when the stores are relatively quiet. Elderly people sometimes find crowds and noise confusing and overwhelming.
- Encourage the resident to make a list before you head for the store. Planning in the peace and quiet of familiar surroundings makes for a more successful expedition.
- Make sure the resident is wearing comfortable, non-slip shoes.
- Park near the entrance to the store, or drop the resident at the door before you park so that energy isn't wasted in the parking lot.
- Allow enough time for your family member to shop at a comfortable pace -- which may be much slower than your pace. Decide ahead not to rush.
- Keep your attention focused on the resident. Don't squeeze in your personal chores, and don't leave your shopping companion unattended in a strange location.
- Encourage the resident to make choices and purchases independently.

Remember, an unusual or frivolous purchase can be "good for the soul."

- Stop often to sit and rest or enjoy a cup of tea or other refreshment. Frequent breaks make a trip more enjoyable.
- Know the person's tolerance and energy level. Some people can shop for three hours; others tire after one.
- Take a magnifying glass along for residents who need help reading labels.
- Don't let problems with transportation spoil an outing. Extencicare staff can teach you how to transfer a resident in and out of the car. Many shopping malls have wheelchairs available -- just call ahead and reserve one. Also, many communities offer special transportation services that will take you and the resident -- complete with wheelchair -- wherever you want to go.
- An older person's body temperature can rise or drop dramatically in a very short period of time. Never leave a resident in a closed car in hot weather or exposed to cold weather.
- If you find shopping with an elderly person to be too difficult or frustrating, don't do it! Spend time together doing things you both enjoy, and let someone else look after the shopping.