

## Gift Ideas for the Alzheimer's Patient

*Finding a Christmas or Hanukkah present for a person with Alzheimer's disease is a challenge. Does the patient still enjoy some of his old favorite activities? Does she like to reminisce about her childhood, play memory games, or listen to music? Is he bedridden or confined to his room? Consider all of these things when reviewing this list of suggestions, and use your own imagination and knowledge of the patient's abilities and interests to guide you.*

- ◆ **Taxi charge account:** A practical gift for early stage patients who have had to give up driving.
- ◆ **Music:** Tapes, records, or CDs (along with the appropriate player), a simple rhythm instrument like a tambourine, a radio, or simply joining in a sing-along.
- ◆ **Books:** A homemade scrapbook or photo album filled with bright, cheerful pictures, or a purchased picture book with outdoor scenes, sports photos, etc.
- ◆ **Exercise material:** Could be simple as a "Nerf" ball (soft sponge ball that can be tossed around inside) or as complex as an exercise bicycle.
- ◆ **Safe Return** identification bracelet available through the Alzheimer's Association Especially good for wanderers.
- ◆ **Dolls:** Soft stuffed animals and dolls; Alzheimer's patients enjoy cuddly things.
- ◆ **Craft items:** Simple craft project is especially good for early-stage patients.
- ◆ **Blocks:** Large and colorful.
- ◆ **Bulletin Boards:** Great for the patient's room. Cut out his or her name in large felt letters and glue it on, then fill the bulletin board with family photos or special mementos. Encourage the patient to help change the contents of the board periodically.
- ◆ **Beads:** Plastic beads or beads for stringing. (large enough so as not to be a choking hazard)
- ◆ **Home Adaptation equipment:** Bathtub safety bars, smoke detectors, and night-lights. Not very exciting, but very practical.
- ◆ **Plants:** Small flowering types to brighten the patient's room and give him or her something to care for, if possible. Wilting plants are depressing, so make sure that somebody is looking after them.
- ◆ **Gift certificate:** For the beauty shop, pharmacy, grocery store, or for a manicure, pedicure, or massage.
- ◆ **Clothing washable,** one-size-too-big items, pull-on or with large zipper pulls for easy changing, preferably in the patient's favorite colors. Consider slip-on or Velcro-closure shoes; cardigan sweaters; sturdy undergarments; coordinating outfits and jogging suits with elastic waists; thermal slipper socks; bathrobe; pajamas or nightgown; shawl; clip-on ties; sleeping stretch bras; sweatshirts that express the patient's former interests (great conversation starters). Avoid items with tailored sleeves, cuffs, small buttons, or difficult hooks.
- ◆ **Stationery:** With stamped envelopes and a large-print, filled-in address book.

- ◆ **Calendar:** With large numbers and cheerful pictures, marked with special anniversaries.
- ◆ **Food:** Cookies, cake, fruit, old favorites. (Check with the caregiver if you are unsure of the patient's dietary restrictions. In general, avoid alcohol.)
- ◆ **Memory box:** Filled with objects that have special meaning to the patient or will trigger memories, or with yarn for winding or fabric samples of different textures to feel, fold and arrange.
- ◆ **Etc.** Hand mirrors, playing cards, large crayons, aftershave or perfume, plastic jewelry, powder, bath salts, flashlights.

The best gift for any Alzheimer's patient may be regular visits and plenty of physical affection. Encourage family and friends to come as often as possible, even if it is painful for them or the patient doesn't recognize them. Most of all, be free with hugs and caresses; just a touch will usually be welcome.

Courtesy of the North Virginia Chapter

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