



Q: We're driving from Chicago to Oakland next month to attend a big family reunion. We expect to do it in three days, stopping two nights at motels along the way. We'll be away for at least a week.

The problem is that our parents want to come with us. We're not exactly young, but Mom is 78 and Dad is 84. They're in good shape for their ages, but we're worried that they'll not only slow us down, but could need emergency treatment along the way. What do you suggest?

A: Instead of dwelling on your fears, you should all visit family doctors and get complete pre-trip check-ups. If there are valid medical reasons why your parents can't go, then tell them gently as possible. You may suggest they fly instead, although these days flying can be at least as much of a hassle as a road trip. However, instead of three to six days of discomfort, flying would only involve a couple of hours each way.

If you take your parents, be sure to pack at least a two-week supply of prescription and over-the-counter medicines. Also, keep a well-stocked first aid kit in the car. On the road, make potty stops at least every two hours, and see to it that your parents eat sensibly as they would at home.

As a precaution, take medications for upset stomachs. Suggested for constipation are (Senocot, Lactulose) and diarrhea (Imodium, Lomotil). For car motion sickness, there's Phenergan or Benadryl.

On the motel overnight stops, your parents should have their own room, and not have to share it with anyone else, particularly kids. Allow them to get eight hours of sleep. To anticipate the worst, such as falling injury accidents, severe burns and other incidents requiring quick medical help, take a written list of along-the-road medical facility contacts before you leave home. Also phone numbers of personal family physicians, in case they need to be consulted.

Vitaly important is to have a fully-charged basic or multi-task cell phone on the journey in case there's ever the need to call 9-1-1, day and night, for immediate help. Pack other potentially useful items in the car to insure adequate nutrition, health and comfort all along the way. Take an ice box or plug-in refig to hold supplies of water, sparkling water, juices, raw fruit/veggies and small packages of energy bars. In case of need to visit doctors, clinics or hospitals along

the way, each person in the car should have a written list of all prescription medication, as well as names and phone numbers of appropriate hometown doctors.

Finally, while taking care of the needs of senior human travelers, don't forget first aid for the car, van or station wagon. Before the trip begins, it should have a thorough check-up of engine, transmission, air conditioning, lights, electric connections and other vitals. Also, be sure the tires and spare are in excellent condition.

*Submitted by MaryJane Epps, Evanston IL*