



Sleep Issues and Sundowning



People living with Alzheimer's and other dementia may have problems sleeping or experience increased confusion, anxiety, agitation, pacing and disorientation beginning at dusk and continuing throughout the night (referred to as sundowning). Although the exact cause is unknown, these changes result from the disease's impact on the brain.

COPING STRATEGIES



Keep the home well lit in the evening.



Make a comfortable and safe sleep environment.



Maintain a schedule.



Avoid stimulants.



Identify soothing activities.



Plan activities and appointments in the a.m. or early afternoon.



Be mindful of your own mental and physical exhaustion.



Join a support group; call 800.272.3900.

TALKING WITH A DOCTOR

Discuss sleep disturbances with a doctor to help identify causes and possible solutions. Physical ailments, such as urinary tract infections, restless leg syndrome or sleep apnea, can cause or worsen sleep problems. For sleep issues due primarily to Alzheimer's, most experts encourage the use of non-drug measures rather than medication. In some cases when non-drug approaches fail, medication may be prescribed for agitation during the late afternoon and evening hours. Work with the doctor to learn the risks and benefits of medication before making a decision.

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