

SLEEPING PROBLEMS



Sleeping problems are common in dementia patients. The brain deterioration associated with various forms of dementia tends to affect the way the brain sleeps. Sleeping problems commonly drive family caregivers crazy. Due to the fact when your person with dementia does not sleep well, this means that you do not sleep well.

POSSIBLE CAUSE

- Mood problems, such as anxiety or depression.
- Side effects of medications.
- Sleep apnea.
- Need for less sleep with increased age.
- Disrupted sleep patterns.
- Room temperature.
- Chronic pain.
- Lighting.
- Change in environment.
- Bathroom is needed.
- Too much daytime napping.
- Not enough exercise.
- Too much caffeine or alcohol.
- Hunger.
- Frustration.
- Illness.
- Disturbing dream.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What time does your person with dementia normally go to bed?
- What time does your person with dementia normally wake up in the morning?
- Do they often have trouble falling asleep at night?
- About how many times do they wake up in the middle of the night?
- At what time do they wake up in the middle of the night?
- Do they usually have trouble falling back asleep?
- Do they frequently snore, gasp for air or stop breathing?
- Do they kick or thrash about while asleep?
- Are they still sleepy or tired during the day?
- Do they usually take one or more naps during the day?
- If they nap during the day, how often and for how long?
- Do they usually doze off without planning to during the day?
- Do they have the urge to move their legs or experience uncomfortable sensations in their legs?
- Do they have to get up to use the bathroom during the night?
- How much physical activity do they do daily?
- Are they exposed to natural outdoor lighting?
- What medications do they take, and at what time of day and night?
- Could they be suffering any uncomfortable side effects from your medications?
- How much caffeine and alcohol do they consume each day?
- How often do they feel sadness or anxiety?
- Have they suffered any personal losses recently?

STRATEGIES

- Make sure the person with dementia sees plenty of daylight and does lots of activity during the day.
- Improve the sleeping environment by making sure the room temperature is comfortable, quiet and appropriately lit.
- Cut down on caffeine and alcohol.
- Place a clock next to the bed that shows whether it is day or night.
- If they like to cuddle find a soft toy or stuff animal.
- To help the person relax better before bed considers going for a walk, having a warm cup of milk or warm shower or bath.
- Plan quiet and relaxing activities for late afternoon/evening.
- Consider the person's behaviors such as hunger, thirst, pain, and their need for a bathroom.
- Give a backrub or massage.
- Make sure they are receiving adequate exercise.
- Try giving them something to eat or drink thirty minutes prior to the restless.
- Have a medical work up to identify and treat medical problems.
- Make sure the person uses the bathroom before going to bed.
- Get the person out of bed earlier or keeping them up later until tired.
- Maintain a set bedtime and waking routine.
- Continue bedtime rituals from the past.
- Prevent daytime napping.
- Avoid laying clothes out for the next day or talking about the next day activities. This may be confusing and give them the wake-up signal.
- Allow them to sleep on the couch or in a recliner if refusing to get into bed.
- Try softly playing a radio beside the bed.
- Remind them its dark out and time for sleep.
- Consult a doctor about sleeping medications. However, be cautious about the medication they can sometimes make symptoms of confusion and disorientation worse.

TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS

- Approach them in a calm manner.
- Find out if there is something they need.
- Avoid arguing.
- Gently remind them of the time.
- Offer reassurance that everything is alright.
- Don't use physical restraint.

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