

Caregivers *in the know*

5 Tips to improve sleep in Dementia

Dementia causes changes in the brain that can worsen sleep. Someone with Alzheimer's or dementia can experience frequent waking, troubled sleep, or being awake at night. To help them get better rest at night here are 5 tips that improve sleep in dementia.

Consider the lighting

Our minds depend on natural light to help maintain a health sleep-wake cycle. Help your loved one experience light during the daytime and darkness at night. A light therapy lamp in the mornings is a good habit to develop since we can't always count on sunny days. Then in the evening, be sure the curtains or blinds are closed and the room is as dark as possible to help cue your loved one that it will soon be time to sleep.

Help the client be active and exercise for at least 30 minutes per day

Of course, ensure the client is able to exercise and ensure they are safe to do. The Alzheimer's Association recommends exercising at least 4 hours before bedtime. Researchers found that daily habits of using light therapy lamp and walking helped people with dementia to sleep 32% more during the night. Not only that, they also woke up an average of 5 less times during the night. So, whether it's walking, lifting light weights or canned goods, do some seated exercises or work on some chores together (if appropriate and client is able to do so). Staying active will help the client be tired by bedtime.

Make sure the client's physical needs are met before going to bed

Have they gone to the bathroom? Brushed their teeth? Is the temperature comfortable? Are their pajamas comfortable? The whole focus is to ensure they are comfortable and in the "ready for bed" mindset when they actually go to bed and don't feel the need to get up during the night.

Play relaxing sounds before and during bedtime

Listening to music has been shown to increase deep sleep and REM stages which restores energy, relax the muscles and lower blood pressure. Focus on low, and slow music without lyrics. It could also be nature sounds or static white noise.

Use aromatherapy and hand rubs

Research shows that breathing in certain essential oils like lavender, sweet orange, and cedarwood help with dementia to have longer, uninterrupted periods of sleep throughout the night. You can disperse the oils using a diffuser, by putting a few drops on a towel draped over the pillow, or even using an aromatherapy lotion.

