

## Tips for Improving Sleep with Dementia

Seniors who are living with memory loss face a wide range of problems that affect their daily lives. One of the top issues is sleep. While we may think that a lot of our sleep issues are normal as we age – such as inability to rest, waking up in the middle of the night and not feeling well-rested in the morning – those with Alzheimer’s disease or other forms of dementia are often affected by sleep issues that are far from normal and with some preventative measures, can be helped.

The first step in treating changes caused by memory loss is to know why these sleep changes occur. According to articles by [Unforgettable](#) and the [Alzheimer’s Association](#)<sup>®</sup>, some of the most common reasons include:

- **Disorientation.**
- **Fear of Shadows.**
- **Sundowners.**
- **Exhaustion.**
- **Medical Problems.**

### How to Help Seniors with Dementia Get Better Sleep

1. **Limit daytime napping.** Try to keep your loved one from napping during the day, especially if they nap and then do not rest well at night. If they are really tired and must take a nap, limit it to short periods in order to ensure a more restful night.
2. **Get exercise.** If your loved one with dementia is active and engaged during the daytime, they will be less likely to want to nap. Exercising and making activity a part of your daily routine can make them healthier while also improving their sleep. According to the Alzheimer’s Association<sup>®</sup> it’s important that exercise does not occur at least four hours before bedtime because of the surge of endorphins that can keep them awake.
3. **Make sure the environment is right.** It’s important that your loved one’s bedroom is well equipped with their security objects, decent lighting with minimal shadows and that the temperature is just right. Make sure their needs are met and that they are not thirsty, uncomfortable or have to use the bathroom.
4. **Identify triggers.** Take time to notice if there are things that keep your loved one up and awake at night. What wakes them up the most often? Watching television before bed or receiving visits from family before bedtime can cause seniors to be more awake. Limit visitors to daytime hours as this can help your loved one nap less and can also help them to wind down better at night. It’s also important that caregivers monitor caffeine and alcohol intake, as these can make sleeping more difficult for seniors with dementia.

### We Would Love to Hear from You!

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