

Ideas for Activities

If the person with dementia is active and engaged in something, they are less likely to start walking or pacing. Some ideas include:

- Chatting or reading together
- Relaxing activities like hand massage or foot spa
- Playing the persons favourite music
- Looking through a picture book together
- Going outside for a walk
- Having a cup of tea together
- Looking through old photographs

You may need to try some of these things for several weeks before you see an improvement.



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Helping someone with dementia
who is having trouble sleeping



Problems with Sleep

Good sleep is important for people with dementia to improve daytime function but up to half of people with dementia will have difficulty with sleep.

There are many possible causes of changes to sleeping patterns. The way that the brain controls sleep may have changed, the environment might make it difficult to sleep or the person may have unmet needs or other problems such as pain.

Although each person will experience dementia differently, certain forms of disrupted sleep are relatively common, including:

- Daytime drowsiness.
- Sleeping in other places rather than in bed.
- Fear or anxiety about going to bed.
- Less deep, restful sleep and more lighter interrupted sleep.
- Problems getting to sleep.
- Waking in the middle of the night thinking it is time to get up
- Restlessness during the night.

Why is this happening?

Although with dementia there can be changes in the brain that disrupt the normal sleeping pattern, some people may have always had trouble sleeping even before they were diagnosed with dementia.

Other reasons why a person with dementia might have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep:

- An upset in the “internal body clock,” causing a mix-up between day and night.
- Older people need less sleep and will often need to get up several times to use the toilet.
- If a person does not recognise their current environment as home they may also be reluctant to sleep in a room they don’t recognise as their own.
- Day time napping or inactivity may mean the person does not feel tired at night.
- The environment might be too noisy, cold or too hot to sleep properly.
- Depression and pain can also reduce the quality of sleep and should be checked with the GP before trying other strategies

Things to Try

1. Try to keep a night time routine, remember this will be different for each individual.
2. Encourage relaxing activities in the evening e.g. milky drink / calming music before getting into bed.
3. Keep the home well lit and provide a night light if the person feels frightened.
4. Make sure the person has enough exercise/ activity during the day and that they use the toilet before bed.
5. If the person wakes up in the night, gently remind them that it is night-time and guide them back to their bedroom.
6. Personalise the bedroom as much as possible with old photos and objects to increase feelings of familiarity and belonging.
7. Make sure the room is at a comfortable temperature
8. If the person can read a clock leave one beside the bed so they can re-orientate themselves to the time if they wake up in the middle of the night.
9. Check with the GP if there are medications which can be taken at different times of the day if they have a negative effect on sleep.