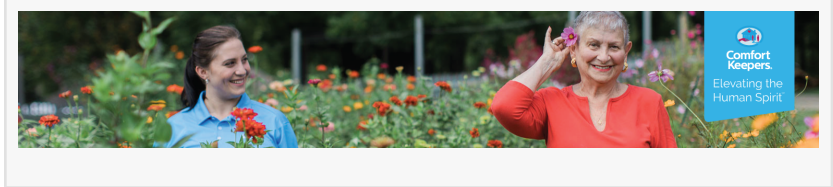


Dementia and Sundowning: What it is and How to Help Seniors Cope

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-- If you've ever heard the term "sundowning" and weren't sure what it meant, you're not alone. Sundowning is a symptom accompanied with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of

dementia and most often occurs in those with mid- and -late stages of dementia. With sundowning, agitation and confusion worsen in the late afternoon and evening - after the sun goes down in the early evening, and symptoms are less noticeable earlier in the day. Sundown syndrome is also sometimes referred to as "late-day confusion."



Sundowning symptoms can be verbal or physical. Behaviors in sundowners can occur abruptly, with no obvious reason or as the result of a frustrating situation for the senior. Sundowning can be difficult to cope with, but it's important to remember that the person suffering from dementia or Alzheimer's is not acting aggressively on purpose - these are side effects of their memory loss disease.

Factors that may provoke sundowning behaviors

A change in the "internal body clock," creating a biological mix-up between day and night
End-of-day exhaustion (both physical and mental)

Disorientation caused by the inability to detach dreams from reality when sleeping

Reduced lighting and increased shadows, causing people with dementia or Alzheimer's to misinterpret what they are seeing, so they become afraid and confused

Reactions to nonverbal cues of frustration from friend or family caregivers who are exhausted after their day

Change in the normal, everyday routine

Strategies for managing the symptoms of sundowning

Provide familiarity and comfort. For loved ones suffering from dementia, the world can be a scary place. Surround them with comfortable blankets and pillows, happy family photographs, figurines, and other familiar items.

Light up the home in the evening hours. Adequate lighting may reduce the agitation that occurs when the senior's surroundings are unfamiliar or dark.

Create a safe and comfortable sleep environment. Maintain a comfortable room temperature. Provide nightlights and appropriate window and door locks. Motion detectors and door sensors can be used to alert family members when the person is wandering unattended.

Maintain a schedule. As much as possible, encourage the senior with dementia to comply to a regular daily routine of waking, meals, and going to bed. If the senior is suffering from sleep issues, a low dose of melatonin may help - but make sure to first consult with their physician. Avoid large dinners and stimulants. Ensure the person avoids alcohol and nicotine, and restrict caffeine and sweets to the morning hours. Instead of large evening meals, serve a light snack. Plan more active days. Discourage napping in the afternoon and plan activities for the morning hours or early afternoon. Encourage daily exercise, but limit to no later than four hours before bedtime.

Decrease stress. Try to help the person remain calm in the evening hours. Stick to simple activities that aren't demanding or fear-inducing. You might wish to put on soft music to create a relaxing environment. Watching TV or reading a book may be too hard to follow and further frustrate the senior.

Try to identify triggers and take notes. Limit distractions during the evening hours such as guests coming and going, loud music, bright lights, etc. Keep a journal of time of day, environment, activities, and behavior to identify triggers. Then you can do your best to avoid those situations that promote confusion and agitation in your loved one.

Be observant of your own physical and mental exhaustion. If you begin to feel stressed by late afternoon, the person may sense the stress and become confused or agitated. Make sure to get plenty of rest at night for more energy during the day.

Comfort Keepers® Edison can help. Sundowning syndrome can be exhausting for seniors suffering from Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia, as well as their friends and families. Comfort Keepers not only understands this challenge and helps with Alzheimer's and dementia care, but we also offer respite care services for family members so you can remain supportive and patient for your loved one. Call us today at (732) 530-3636 to learn more about our [in-home care](#) services.

This release was drafted by [Results Driven Marketing, LLC](#): a full-service digital marketing, public relations, advertising and content marketing firm located in Wynnewood, PA.

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