

Definitions

Alzheimer's Disease is often referred to as **AD**. This illness permanently damages the brain and is the most common form of dementia. It can lead to problems with memory, thinking, behaviour, and emotions.

Behaviours are the activities that a person with AD does that seem unusual and are difficult for the caregiver to deal with. Behaviours are caused by changes in the brain.

A **caregiver** is someone who helps a person with AD. They may buy groceries for them, help them bathe, take them to church, visit them, or send them money. They may live with the person, in a different town, or even another country.

Dementia is a set of symptoms that can include memory loss, loss of problem solving skills, trouble communicating, a change in personality, and confusion about time and place.

Sundowning is when a person with Alzheimer's disease becomes anxious, agitated, or begins to pace late in the afternoon as the sun begins to set.

Alzheimer's disease affects each person differently. The behaviours listed in this brochure are common but may not be experienced by everyone with the disease.



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Dementia & Alzheimer's Disease Information



Nighttime Behaviour Problems

Sundowning
Sleeplessness
Night Wandering

Sundowning

The cause of sundowning is unknown. It may be due to mental exhaustion, confusion between day and night, or less lighting which can cause shadows.



What you can do to help.

- Go with them for a walk rather than letting them take an afternoon nap.
- Avoid planning too many activities in the evening.
- Create a calm, quiet environment.
- Use plenty of lighting.
- Find an activity for them to do in the same room as you.
- Try to relax and enjoy some time to yourself before this time of day to help lower your own stress.

Sleeplessness

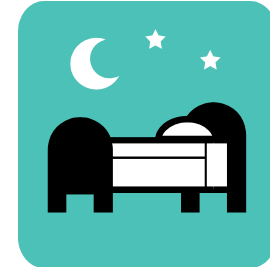
Older adults often have trouble sleeping. This problem can increase for a person with AD. Sleeplessness for someone with Alzheimer's disease often keeps the caregiver from getting enough sleep too.

What you can do to help.

- Try to keep them active and awake during the day.
- Make sure they have used the bathroom before bed.
- If they do not seem comfortable in bed, try having them sleep on the couch or in a chair.
- Keep a nightlight on.
- If they wake during the night it may be due to thirst, hunger, or the need to go to the bathroom.
- Keep a journal of the day's activities, foods eaten, and behaviours. This can help you see what works and what does not.
- Ask someone to care for the person with AD so you can sleep.

Night Wandering

A person with AD may wake in the night, forget where they are, have trouble seeing in the dark, become confused, and wander around the house.



What you can do to help.

- Keep a nightlight on in their room and in the bathroom.
- If they believe they are seeing people, cover mirrors with a cloth to prevent them from noticing their own reflection.
- Keep your home safe.
 - Keep medications and unsafe items in a locked cabinet.
 - Remove knobs from the stove.
 - Put door locks out of reach to prevent them from leaving the house during the night.
 - Keep the floor clear of clutter.