



THE SILVER TSUNAMI

AGING INFO

Your Ticket to Compassion, Navigating the Dementia Journey

Chapter 7 – Ideas for nighttime routines

An evening bedtime routine should begin a couple of hours prior to the person actually going to bed. The goal is to begin reducing any stimulation so that they become in a relaxed state and are more prepared to go to bed. Below are ideas to think about trying or incorporating into their routine.

- Have the same wake up time and bed time each day as much as possible. This predictability helps signal the brain to become accustomed to a routine that is beneficial.
- Dimming the lights. As evening approaches, dimming the lights in the house helps signal to the person that they day is ending. Bright lights and shadows can increase confusion during this time of day, which can also increase.
- Light snacks or drinks. Drinks and snacks in the evening should not include caffeine or sugar. Meaning coffee or tea with caffeine may energize the person, versus relaxing the person. Sugary snacks like ice cream or chocolate may also increase energy. It is best to stick with drinks like decaffeinated coffee or tea, or milk. Snacks such as fruit, apple slices with peanut butter, or avocado toast, may all help give the person a better night sleep.
- Playing soothing music. Gentle, familiar music may provide a calming effect. Choose music the person may enjoy such as piano music, instrumental music, or hymns, even playing the sounds of nature can help.
- Use essential oils. Calming scents like lavender, chamomile, or frankincense can be used. Use them in a diffuser or put them on a cotton ball and place between the pillow and pillowcase for the person to breathe in throughout the night. You can add the essential oils to unscented lotion and use it for hand massages or rub the lotion into their chest and neck for the person to breathe in throughout the night.
- Avoid electronics such as television, iPhone, androids, iPads, or tablets. The blue light from these devices can interfere with the body's natural sleep-wake cycle.

- The use of visual cards or pictures can help them read what the nighttime routine should be, and they can follow the steps each night thus helping them maintain as much independence as possible.
- Physical needs. Be sure to address any physical needs the person may have. If they typically have a nighttime drink, try to do this 90 minutes to 2 hours prior to going to bed so there is time to empty the bladder as much as possible prior to going to bed.
- Provide a security object. Find something that provides security for the person. This may be a weighted blanket, although if a person is tiny be cautious of how heavy this blanket might be as you do not want the person to feel trapped under the blanket that will only increase their anxiety. A favorite blanket can be used as well. Their favorite color or one that someone made for them. A soft stuffed animal may also bring them comfort.
- Creating a safe space. Motion lights or night lights can be helpful. Ensure that there is no clutter on the floor or anything that might cause them to trip and fall should they get up during the night.
- Sleep aides. If the person is having difficulty falling or staying asleep, you may want to have a conversation with the person's primary care physician or neurologist. They may be able to offer suggestions on how to help.

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