

## Team Angels



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## Sundowning In Dementia: How To Cope

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**S**undowning, sometimes referred to as "Sundowning Syndrome", is a symptom of dementia that involves increased confusion and agitation throughout the late afternoon and evening. Patients and caregivers have been describing sundowning for years but it is only recently that the symptom has been medically recognized, although as many as 45% of people with Alzheimer's disease will experience the bizarre quirk. As sunlight begins to fade, sufferers may become more confused and forgetful, increasingly frustrated and argumentative with caregivers, have more trouble sleeping than usual, and be afflicted by serious tremors. How can you help to ease the effects of sundowning?

**>** *Sundowning affects many individuals with dementia, but it doesn't have to be overly debilitating. These steps will help alleviate the effects of sundowning to help insure happier and calmer evenings.*

### Plan Activities In The Morning

Individuals who suffer from sundowning become less lucid in the late afternoon so plan any activities or necessary outings for the morning instead. This will alleviate the stress of being out and about when symptoms become more acute.

### Decrease Caffeine

There is some evidence to suggest that caffeine is linked to sundowning, and the symptoms can be worsened by the caffeine "crash" that tends to occur in the evening after a day of coffee drinking. Try to limit the intake of tea, coffee, and soda or move to decaffeinated brands.

*(continued)*



## Why Music?

We have joined a network of over 1000 facilities and agencies across 45 states and 8 countries that promote the MUSIC & MEMORY<sup>SM</sup> Therapeutic program. It is the program's goal to make personalized therapeutic music a standard of care throughout the health care industry. We are presently working with our dementia clients here in the SW Missouri Area providing the therapeutic personalized music in the home and are seeing amazing results.



### Why It Works

- The brain ties music to memory
- The personalized therapeutic music enables the listener to reconnect, regain social skills and live more fully.

### Therapeutic Benefits of Personalized Music

- Finally, a way to give pleasure to persons with advanced dementia
- Offers an enjoyable, fulfilling activity for persons in dialysis, on vent or bed-bound
- Increases cooperation and attention, reduces resistance to care—a real boost for staff morale
- Reduces agitation and sundowning
- Enhances engagement and socialization, fostering a calmer social environment
- Provides a valuable tool for the effort to reduce reliance on anti-psychotic medications
- Provides uplifting positive energy to staff members and family caregivers ♦

## Less Napping

Restlessness is a common feature of sundowning which can cause sufferers to wander and pace during the night when they can't get to sleep. Try to limit the amount of naps taken during the day so that the evening naturally becomes a time to wind down and feel more sleepy.

## More Daytime Activity

Similarly, by increasing activity in the daytime, you'll provide more incentive to be tired and sleep well at night. This could involve going for a morning walk, doing some gardening, or socializing while there is still ample daylight.

## Increase Indoor Lighting

Sundowning seems to be related to circadian rhythms and the setting of the sun in the evening, so by increasing indoor lighting throughout the evening you can offset the intensity of the change between day and night. Some doctors have noted significant positive effects of increased evening lighting.

## Provide Calming Influences

The frustration and agitation that accompany sundowning can be difficult for sufferers and their relatives and caregivers so try to provide calming influences like relaxing music and herbal teas throughout the late afternoon and evening to keep stress levels down.

## Remove Excess Stimuli

It is also useful to get rid of anything overly stimulating or distracting in the environment such as noisy television shows or large groups of people. By limiting the amount of stimuli, you're removing elements that can make the sufferer feel more agitated or confused.

## Be Patient

Although sundowning can be trying for the sufferer and their carers it often passes as dementia progresses, so try to remain patient and accepting of the symptoms and don't let your temper get the best of you. Getting angry won't help anyone so take a minute and remember to be sympathetic. ♦

## 2016 Fact & Figures

Every 66 seconds, someone in the United States develops the Alzheimer's Disease.....

*"Alzheimer's and dementia patients live in the moment; It is our job to give them as many moments as possible"*

