

# Layton Aging & Alzheimer's Disease Center

## Sleep Problems

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Sleep problems are common in individuals with memory problems and dementia. Because disruptive sleep habits may interfere with caregivers' rest, and lack of sleep may contribute to increased behavior problems, it is important to try to improve sleep patterns when possible.

### **FACILITATE**

- Establish a routine with a regular bedtime. For example, a snack or warm milk before bed, a warm bath one hour prior to bedtime, and reading to before bed.
- Start a daily exercise routine; walking, sweeping, stationary bicycling, joining an exercise group.
- Encourage the person to spend less time in bed. Try going to bed later or getting up earlier.
- If a nap seems necessary, encourage a short nap in the early afternoon.
- Sleeping medications may be helpful, but should not be the first approach.

### **CAREGIVER ISSUES**

- Make the house safe if nighttime awakenings do occur. Secure home so that person cannot leave during the night, remove hazardous objects.
- Assure enough sleep for the caregiver. Nap during the day, arrange nighttime respite for yourself, have separate bedrooms.

### **COMFORT**

- If the person has chronic pain a mild analgesic at bedtime may be helpful, but check first with medical provider.
- Check to see if the person is too cold or too warm while sleeping. Adjust bedclothes and room temperature for comfort.
- Encourage person to empty bladder prior to bedtime.

### **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

- Sleep problems may be a symptom of depression; discuss this with your medical provider.
- Medications may result in problems with sleep; review medications with medical provider on a regular basis.
- If person experiences confusion upon awakening in the night, leave nightlights on in bedroom and bathroom.
- Remove daytime clothing from sleeping area.

### **THINGS TO AVOID**

- Caffeine: including coffee, tea, colas and chocolate, but does not include water, juices, root beer, or decaffeinated beverages.

- Alcohol.
- Going to bed too early. As age increases, total sleep time decreases.
- Long naps during the day.
- Upsetting situations prior to bedtime. Avoid arguing with the person.