



Daylight Savings and Sundowning Syndrome



Did You Know?

Daylight Savings begins this year on November 5. For most of us, we adjust rather quickly to losing and gaining an hour in the Spring and we look forward to an extra hour of sleep in the Winter, but for people who are older or have cognitive impairment or dementia, these changes can affect normal bodily rhythms.

Often referred to as the “body clock”, the circadian rhythm is a natural cycle that tells our bodies when to sleep, rise, and even when to eat, regulating many physiological processes. This internal body clock is affected by environmental cues, like sunlight and temperature and any change in sleep/wake cycles may affect mood and behaviors including behaviors associated with sundowning.

This change in sleep/wake cycle can exacerbate “sundowning syndrome”, the group of symptoms that often occurs in those with dementia usually in the late afternoon or early evening. These behaviors can include signs of confusion late in the day and when the sun is setting, going to bed earlier than normal, changes in appetite, increased confusion, agitation, and worsening behaviors.



Here are some simple solutions that can help reduce the symptoms of sundowning syndrome.

- Keep a predictable routine for bedtime, waking, meals and activities.
- Be aware of shadows from the change in light; how the sunlight shines in the home in spring and fall is different than how it enters in the summer, and these long shadows at the end of the day can be very disorienting. Keep shades wide open or closed. Half open blinds can increase shadows.
- Keep lights on and shades open during the day and keep the room lit enough at night to help with disorientation.
- Plan for activities and exposure to light during the day to encourage nighttime sleepiness.
- Limit daytime napping.
- Limit caffeine and sugar to morning hours only.
- Turn on a night light to reduce agitation that occurs when surroundings are dark or unfamiliar.
- In the evening, try to reduce background noise and stimulating activities, including TV viewing, which can sometimes be upsetting.
- In a strange or unfamiliar setting, bring familiar items, such as photographs, to create a more relaxed, familiar setting.
- Play familiar, gentle music in the evening or relaxing sounds of nature, such as the sound of waves.

Our Rizzi Mental Health providers are here to help your loved ones and residents cope with sundowning.



The Rizzi Difference
RIZZI MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATES

We are honored to care for you!

www.TheRizziDifference.com

