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Comments, Compliments or Complaints

The Patient Relations/Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) Department provides confidential on the spot advice, information and support to patients, relatives, friends and carers.

Contact Us

Tel: 01942 822376 (Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm)

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Ask 3 Questions



Become more involved in decisions about your healthcare. You may be asked to make choices about your treatment. To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions:

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?

How We Use Your Information

For details on how we collect, use and store the information we hold about you, please take a look at our "how we use your information" leaflet which can be found on the Trust website:
www.wwl.nhs.uk/patient_information/Leaflets/default.aspx

This leaflet is also available in audio, large print, Braille and other languages upon request.
For more information call 01942 773105.

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Sundowning

Patient and carer Information

Patient Information

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Introduction

What is Sundowning?

If someone you care for has dementia, their confusion and agitation may get worse in the late afternoon and evening. In comparison, their symptoms may be less pronounced earlier in the day. This is called Sundowning and is a symptom of dementia. It can be a new confusion which only occurs at this time of day, or an increase in confusion that occurs typically between the hours of 4:30 pm and 11:00 pm.

The person is most likely to experience Sundowning if they have mid-stage to advanced dementia.

Causes

Fading light seems to be a trigger. The symptoms can get worse as the night goes on and usually get better by morning. The reduced lighting and increased shadows can cause people to misinterpret what they see, and become confused and afraid.

Together with:

- End-of-day exhaustion (both mental and physical).
- An upset in the "internal body clock", causing a mix up between day and

night. Reactions to nonverbal cues of frustration from caregivers who are exhausted from their day.

- Disorientation due to the inability to separate dreams from reality when sleeping.

It is also more likely to occur if the person is:

- Too tired
- Too hungry
- Depressed
- In pain
- Bored
- Having sleep problems

Symptoms

- Agitation and anxiousness
- Restlessness and irritability
- Confusion and disorientation
- Suspiciousness

They may also:

- Hear things that aren't there (auditory hallucinations).
- See things that aren't there (visual hallucinations).

Things you can do

Although you may not be able to stop it completely, you can take steps to help manage this challenging time of day so that the person can sleep better and is less tired during the day.

Try to:

- Keep things calm in the evening.
- Close curtains and or blinds and turn on the lights.
- Care staff and family members should try and not make too much noise.
- Play relaxing music which the person likes.

How to react

- Stay calm
- Remind the person what time of day it is
- Don't argue
- Reassure them

If they need to get up and move around or pace, as long as they are safe, don't try to stop them. Just stay close and keep an eye on them.

If the symptoms persist, then the doctor may be able to prescribe medication.