

# Managing Dementia-related Behaviors While Sheltering in Place

## General Principles:

- Behavior has meaning
- Communication is key
- Behavior management requires the use of non-pharmacologic strategies
- Protecting caregiver health and well-being is essential

## Resources:

- **Alzheimer's Association** 24/7 Helpline 1-800-272-3900
- **UCSF Memory and Aging Center** website:  
[memory.ucsf.edu/caregiving-support/behavior-personality-changes](http://memory.ucsf.edu/caregiving-support/behavior-personality-changes)
- **Family Caregiver Alliance:** Fact and Tip Sheets:  
[www.caregiver.org/caregivers-guide-understanding-dementia-behaviors](http://www.caregiver.org/caregivers-guide-understanding-dementia-behaviors)
- **Coping with Behavior Change in Dementia** by Beth Spencer & Laurie White

## Melatonin:

Extra notes by Dr. Mary De May:

The pineal gland in the brain is the major source of melatonin, a natural hormone whose role is to help regulate sleep-wake cycles. Levels of melatonin in the blood are lower in the day and increase after dark, dropping again before daylight.

In studies of healthy volunteers, 0.5 mg of pure melatonin given at 5 PM advanced the natural secretion of melatonin. Larger doses caused greater phase advance (getting sleepy earlier). So, it is good for people who are staying up very late.

Physiologic (naturally produced) dose of melatonin is 0.1–0.3 mg to help induce sleep, and 0.3–0.5 mg to help move time of sleep onset to earlier. In older adults, low doses are advised. If you cannot find the really low dose preparation (0.1–0.5 mg), you can buy 1 mg tablets and cut in half. Risk of higher doses is elevating melatonin levels in the blood to 3–60 × normal. Side effects can be daytime sleepiness, impaired mental and physical function, hypothermia, and elevation in the hormone prolactin.

It should be noted that in patients with Lewy body disease, high dose melatonin (6–18 mg) can be used to help with REM behavior disorder, in which people act out their dreams.

References: (may not be available for general access)

[www.uptodate.com/contents/physiology-and-available-preparations-of-melatonin#H722736473](http://www.uptodate.com/contents/physiology-and-available-preparations-of-melatonin#H722736473)  
[www.uptodate.com/contents/rapid-eye-movement-sleep-behavior-disorder](http://www.uptodate.com/contents/rapid-eye-movement-sleep-behavior-disorder)

## Tips for minimizing risks with in-home caregiving

- [domesticemployers.org/tips-for-managing-attendants-caregivers-during-the-coronavirus-crisis](http://domesticemployers.org/tips-for-managing-attendants-caregivers-during-the-coronavirus-crisis)