

# Care at Night

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Care homes give 24 hour care. Many people will have moved into a care home because their night-time needs can no longer be coped with at home. They may be suffering pain, confusion, loss of mobility or continence problems. It is your role to provide support and care to those having disturbed and disrupted nights and to try to remove barriers to a good night's sleep whenever possible.

## SUPPORT AT NIGHT IS A LEGAL REQUIREMENT

To safeguard the health, safety and welfare of service users, the registered person must ensure that, at all times, there are sufficient numbers of suitably qualified, skilled and experienced persons employed for the purposes of carrying out the regulated activities under *The Health & Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014: No 9 Person centred care, No 12 Safe care and treatment, No 18 Staffing*

## Nightlife

We often think of night time as a quiet time but it can be a very busy time for you, perhaps with several residents needing your attention. Many older people find their sleep pattern becomes disrupted by continence needs or illnesses which cause pain, such as arthritis or other conditions which may become worse at night. Dementia can also cause confusion at night.

Specific training in night-time care will give you the knowledge and confidence you need to give sensitive and appropriate care at night when there may be fewer staff around to refer to. You should have clear contact details of who will be responsible and available for support after office hours. This safeguards both the residents and the care workers and confirms that proper support exists.

## Stay connected

Finding ways for day and night staff to communicate with each other helps everyone feel included and informed and leads to better support for residents, such as:

- ✎ plan for night and day shifts to overlap so that vital information, like if a person has been unwell or agitated, is routinely shared, discussed and recorded
- ✎ naming a keyworker for each resident at night as well as day can also help residents and carers to get to know each other better
- ✎ display pictures of all members of staff, including night staff, so that residents and their family and friends can see who is responsible for their care.

Check people's care plans for information about a person's preferences including their night time routine. But don't presume that a person will always want to follow the same routine.

Just as during the day, it is important to keep accurate records, for example about hydration and nutritional intake. Always remember to note and tell senior staff about something you do not understand or any change from a person's normal pattern.



### GOOD PRACTICE

Expert advice about continence helped night-time care workers feel less anxious and more confident over giving residents the right level of support. With the continence nurse's advice, they were able to reduce the number of times they needed to disturb residents during the night. (*Supporting older people in care homes at night*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2008)

## Keynotes

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### CARING AT NIGHT

Since developing chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) Leonard's breathlessness was keeping him awake at night and unable to lie down. John, his keyworker, persuaded him to use his buzzer to call him. Having John there to talk to and help him use his nebuliser, or provide more pillows for support, comforted Leonard and helped him back to sleep. John also told his day keyworker about Leonard's restless nights and asked the nurse to request a GP visit.

### Quiet please, we're sleeping

Although this may be your working day, it is the residents' night. Be aware of the home's atmosphere and environment and how this can affect people's rest and relaxation. It can help to:

- ✎ turn lights off in bedrooms unless asked not to, and dim lights in other areas
- ✎ review whether all night time checks are essential
- ✎ if they are, can they be carried out more sensitively and quietly using torches or dimmed lights?
- ✎ use sensor pads instead of night checks which disturb sleep
- ✎ route alarm bells differently
- ✎ wear soft-soled shoes and avoid talking outside people's doors
- ✎ avoid noise with trolleys and other equipment near sleeping residents
- ✎ have signs that are obvious both day and night, so that however confused, people know where to go for the toilet or the lounge?

### Night owls

We all have our own sleep patterns and it's important to remember that this is the resident's home. Some people may find it hard to settle. Some people with dementia may turn night into day. Others may need help to go to the toilet.

Some may need your encouragement to go back to sleep, while others may want to stay up for a while. Nights can also be a good time to get to know residents. It can be hard to sleep when you are hungry.

Would they like a snack or a hot or cold drink? Would they like to stay in their room or prefer to sit in the lounge, watch TV or chat for a while? Or would they rather be alone, perhaps with music or the radio? But remember others may be trying to sleep, so you will need to be sensitive to this.

Some people may be woken by their illness. Make sure they are comfortable; do they need medication or pain relief? Perhaps they are frightened and lonely and may like a little comfort and company.

### A PEACEFUL NIGHT

Several studies have shown that increasing residents' exposure to bright lighting during the day improves their mental capacity. A darker, quieter environment at night reduces restlessness, and also helps to maintain a natural body clock and results in better sleep. (Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2008 and others).



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