

# SLEEP ISSUES IN FTD

## Help & Support



Sleep issues can be common for those living with FTD and their care partners. While the exact prevalence of sleep disorders in persons with FTD is unclear, surveys suggest that between 33% and 76% of persons with FTD have sleep or nighttime behavior disturbances (McCarter, Louis & Boeve 2016).

In FTD sleep disturbances or changes can occur earlier in the process and can present in a variety of ways:

- Waking frequently during the night
- Sleeping during the day, while being awake at night
- Not sleeping for long stretches or even days at a time
- Sleeping for extended periods of time throughout the day and night

Too much or too little sleep is not good for anyone. In FTD, a lack of proper sleep or rest can exacerbate other cognitive and behavioral symptoms. In addition, care partners can experience increased stress and exhaustion when their loved one's sleep routine no longer aligns with their own. While pursuing options for managing sleep issues, it is important to consider the primary care partner's sleep while also accommodating the changing sleep routines of the person with FTD.

Here are some suggestions for managing sleep changes:

### Talk to your healthcare provider.

- Notify your provider so they can consider (and rule out) other potential causes or contributing factors to the sleep changes.
- Keep a diary of sleep patterns using AFTD's **FTD Behavior Tracker**.
- Discuss anxiety and depression with provider; both can be underlying causes of insomnia.
- Assess and treat any pain that the person diagnosed may be experiencing.
- Discuss sleep aids. Common prescription and over-the-counter sleep medications can cause negative side effects for people with FTD. Use sleep aids carefully and in close consultation with a physician.

### Maintain good sleep hygiene.

- Stick to a bedtime schedule and routine.
- Seek morning sunlight exposure.
- Limit fluids after dinner.
- Limit caffeine and alcohol.
- Incorporate physical exercise into the day.
- Incorporate social activity.

# SLEEP ISSUES IN FTD

## Help & Support

### Accommodate different sleep patterns.

- Create a safe place for the person with FTD to be awake at nighttime.
- Consider video monitors, cameras, or door alarms to notify you if the person with FTD is awake at night or leaves the home.
- Consider creating rotating shifts with other care partners, or hire an aide to supervise when the primary care partner is asleep.
- Whenever possible, create a space for the care partner to rest when the person with FTD is sleeping.

Addressing sleep issues can involve a combination of environmental approaches and, in some cases, medications. As with any psychoactive medication, sleep aids are most successful when used in conjunction with non-pharmacological interventions, such as practicing good sleep hygiene, and often take time to show any benefit.

Getting support from peers, other caregivers, and health professionals is key. The AFTD HelpLine is available for additional support, information, and resources. You can also learn how to connect with other caregivers for support on the **Find Support Near You** page of AFTD's website.

### References

- McCarter, S. J., St. Louis, E. K., & Boeve, B. F. (2016). Sleep disturbances in frontotemporal dementia. *Current neurology and neuroscience reports*, 16, 1-8.



Scan to learn more



[theaftd.org](http://theaftd.org) | HelpLine: 1.866.507.7222 | [info@theaftd.org](mailto:info@theaftd.org)

© 2023 The Association for Frontotemporal Degeneration