

# HomeTimes®

**America's Choice In Home Care**

Your resource for an at home senior lifestyle.



## 6 Tips to Support Seniors with Insomnia

Sleep is an integral part of healthy aging, but what happens if a senior loved one has difficulties getting a good night's rest?

Insomnia, a disorder that causes persistent problems falling or staying asleep, is a common sleep issue among seniors. According to the Sleep Foundation, the following symptoms may indicate insomnia:

- Difficulty falling or staying asleep.
- Waking up early constantly.
- Resisting the need to go to bed at a reasonable time.
- Inability to feel refreshed after waking up in the morning.
- Having issues concentrating during the day.
- Relying on pills to fall asleep.

If a loved one experiences insomnia symptoms, schedule an appointment with a physician.

### ***In-Home Care Can Promote Healthy Sleep***

Although a physician will identify factors contributing to insomnia and recommend a treatment plan, an in-home personal caregiver can offer the following benefits:

#### **1. Provide Companionship**

Visiting Angels can offer companionship to create a peaceful bedtime routine for seniors. Our caregivers offer overnight

and 24/7 care to assist seniors with preparing for bed and serving as a soothing, reassuring presence.

#### **2. Assist with Dementia-Related Symptoms**

Seniors with dementia may experience "sundowning," which can cause increased confusion, anxiety, and agitation beginning at dusk and lasting throughout the night. Sundowning can sometimes result in nighttime wandering, pacing, disorientation, and restlessness. Visiting Angels can provide dedicated personal care and safe overnight supervision.

#### **3. Maintain Healthy Daytime Routines**

Visiting Angels helps encourage restful sleep for seniors by maintaining familiar routines, such as going to bed and waking up at routine times, avoiding long afternoon naps, eating meals on a regular schedule, and getting exercise.

#### **4. Encourage Good Sleep Habits Before Bedtime**

Use a calm tone of voice and avoid outward displays of distress, anger, or fear. If you show your loved one you are angry or upset, their anguish and agitation may worsen.

#### **5. Reduce the Risk of a Nighttime Accident**

If a senior needs to get out of bed to use the bathroom, get a drink, or take medication, they could be at a higher risk of a fall or accident if not supervised — particularly if they are also experiencing problems with mobility, eyesight, or cognitive functioning. Visiting Angels can provide support during the night by minimizing awake time and helping to prevent accidents.

#### **6. Provide Support to Family Caregivers**

When a senior has sleep issues, it can keep everyone else in the household awake. Our professional caregivers can be there to assist a senior during the night, so other family members can get the rest they need, too.

***If your older loved one is living with insomnia, Visiting Angels can take steps to keep them safe, offer reassurance, and promote good sleep habits — while providing peace of mind for family members. Contact us today at 800.365.4189 to schedule a free home care consultation.***



## Common Winter Hazards Among the Elderly

When you think of winter, you probably think about the holidays, taking time off from work, enjoying winter sports, or visiting with family. If you care for an aging loved one, winter might make you also dwell on common cold-weather hazards.

Here are some risks you should know about — and suggestions for how you can keep your senior loved one safe.

### Cold Temperatures

As the temperature outside drops, the risk of hypothermia rises. Seniors are at higher risk of developing hypothermia than younger people because the ability to regulate body temperature decreases with age. Warning signs of hypothermia include:

- Shivering
- Exhaustion
- Confusion
- Loss of dexterity
- Memory loss

As body temperature drops, brain function slows, so older adults are also unlikely to realize they are experiencing symptoms — making hypothermia even more dangerous. If you suspect hypothermia, seek emergency medical help by dialing 911 or go to the nearest hospital emergency room.

Keeping your senior warm through winter by doing the following:

- Make sure they are dressed appropriately for the weather.
- Check for drafts and seal up problematic windows or doors.
- Avoid using space heaters, which can become fire and tripping hazards.
- Ensure the heating system is working correctly and heating bills are paid.
- Have blankets and warm clothing available.

- Make sure your loved one is eating enough. Food is required to create energy the body needs to produce heat.
- Check on your senior frequently (or ask another trusted adult to check on them) to ensure they are comfortable.

### Ice and Snow

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one in four seniors falls annually, leading to 3 million emergency room visits and more than 800,000 hospitalizations. When the ground is covered with snow and ice, the risk of falling becomes even higher. Here's how you can reduce your loved one's fall risk during the winter:

- Clear a path to the front door, mailbox, outdoor trash cans, and other outdoor areas.
- Make sure your loved one is wearing sensible shoes with non-slip soles and using mobility aids if necessary.
- Encourage your loved one not to venture outdoors if conditions are bad unless there is an emergency.
- Clean up indoor puddles caused by melting snow and ice tracked in on someone's shoes.
- Encourage visitors to leave their shoes at the front door.
- Ensure the house is properly lit on darker winter days.

### Cold and Flu

As winter rolls around, so does cold and flu season. Ask your loved one's doctor if they recommend vaccines for flu, pneumonia, or COVID-19. Other preventative measures include:

- Washing hands regularly.
- Asking others to cover their coughs or sneezes.
- Avoiding people who are sick.
- Avoiding crowded events or areas, especially during times of high community spread.
- Avoiding touching eyes, mouth, nose, or face.
- Disinfecting frequently touched surfaces in the home, especially if someone is ill.
- Practicing good health habits, such as eating healthy, drinking plenty of fluids, managing stress, getting adequate sleep, and exercising.

### Consider a Professional Caregiver for Help

With the increased risks associated with winter weather, having someone check in on your loved one regularly is critical. If family and friends are not nearby, our professional caregivers can visit your loved one to monitor the temperature in the house and help them dress in warm, appropriate clothes.

An in-home personal caregiver will provide your elderly loved one with companionship, prevent isolation, and supervise trips outside the house — providing you with peace of mind, even when you can't be there.