

Managing Sundown Syndrome in Dementia



The Geriatric Medicine service provides inpatient and outpatient specialist care to older persons aged 75 years and above. Specialist assessment and individualised holistic management are offered to elderly with bladder and bowel-control problems, memory, mood and behavioural problems and multiple falls or difficulty walking. Patients are cared for by a multi-disciplinary team comprising doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, dietitians, pharmacists, podiatrists and medical social workers, where necessary.

What is Sundown Syndrome?

Sundown Syndrome is a condition in which people with dementia get more confused, restless or insecure in the late afternoon and evening, or when the sun goes down.



It may worsen after a move or change in the person's routine. He/she may become more demanding, restless, upset, suspicious, disoriented and even start to "see", "hear" or believe in things that are unreal, especially at night.

Sundown Syndrome affects people in the mid or advanced stage of dementia.

Reducing sundown behaviour can benefit both the person with dementia and the caregiver.

Possible Reasons for Sundown Syndrome

- End-of-day exhaustion (mental and physical) which affects their ability to cope with stress.
- Upset in the “internal body clock” which causes a biological mix-up, affecting the differentiation from day and night.
- With poor lighting and the appearance of shadows, people with dementia may misinterpret what they see, and get confused and afraid.
- Lack of activity in the evening (as compared to the morning) can cause restlessness at the end of the day.
- Disorientation caused by the lack of ability to differentiate dreams from reality.
- Less need for sleep is a common condition in older adults.



Managing Sundown Syndrome

- **Get an early afternoon rest**

Keep the person active in the morning and encourage him/her to rest after lunch to prevent over fatigue. Keep this rest to a maximum of 30 minutes.

- **Engage in familiar activities**

Suggest familiar activities in the evening. Have a pre-dinner drink/soup or get him/her to prepare dinner with you.

- **Avoid physical restraint**

Let them pace where they are.

- **Encourage comforting pastimes**

This may include familiar soft toys, pets, tunes or old songs.

- **Monitor their diet**

Limit sweets and caffeine to the morning and keep evening meals small and simple.



- **Minimise noise and lights**

Bright lights and noise from the television and radio may add to confusion and cause restlessness.

- **Avoid upsetting activities**

Try not to arrange for baths or showers in the late afternoon if it causes the person to be upset.

- **Close the curtains but provide adequate lighting**

This reduces the appearance of shadows in the room when it gets dark.

- **Consider home adjustments to help the person sleep better:**

- Use dim lights
- Play soft music
- Maintain a comfortable room temperature
- Offer him/her a glass of warm milk
- Massage him/her with their favorite creams, lotions or ointments



Notes:

For more information

Ng Teng Fong General Hospital and Jurong Community Hospital

1 Jurong East St 21, Singapore 609606

www.ntfgh.com.sg | www.jch.com.sg

Clinic opening hours

Monday – Friday: 8.30am – 5.30pm

Saturday: 8.30am – 12.30pm (Selected clinics only*)

Dental Clinic: Monday – Thursday: 8.00am – 5.30pm, Friday: 8.00am – 5.00pm

*Please refer to our websites for more details.

General enquiries & appointments

General enquiries line: 6908 2222 (24-hr)

Fax: 6716 5500 | Email: contactus@nuhs.edu.sg

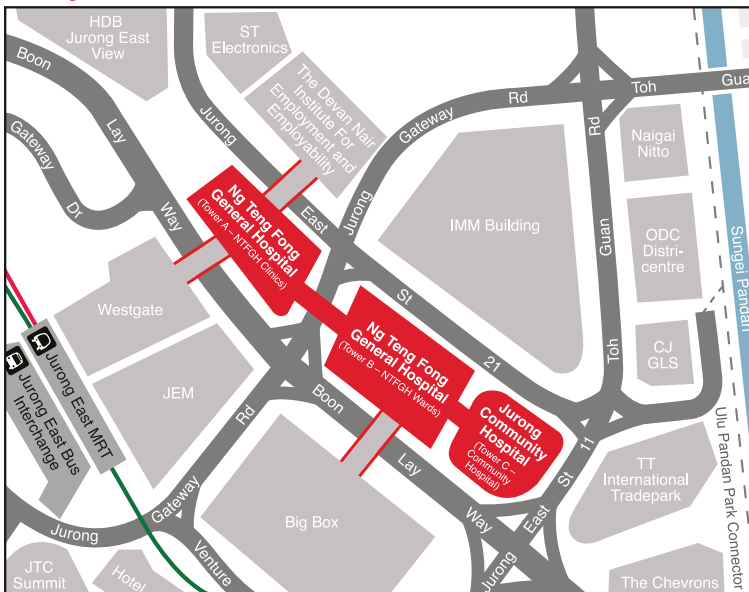
Appointment line: 6908 2222 (Monday – Friday: 8.00am – 5.30pm, Saturday: 8.00am – 12.30pm)

Fax: 6716 2200 | Email: appointment@nuhs.edu.sg

Dental appointment line: 6716 2233 (Monday – Friday: 8.00am – 5.30pm)

Fax: 6716 2200 | Email: JHCampus_Dental@nuhs.edu.sg

Getting there



By train

Alight at Jurong East MRT Station

By bus

Jurong East Bus Interchange

41, 49, 51, 52, 66, 66B, 78, 78A, 79, 79A, 97, 97E, 98, 98M, 105, 143, 143M, 160, 160A, 160M, 183, 183B, 197, 333, 334, 335, 506

Along Boon Lay Way

49, 99, 333, Private bus service 625, 990

Disclaimer:

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