Can Blue Light Help Someone With Alzheimer’s?

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Blue Light for Alzheimer’s

Anyone who lives with an Alzheimer’s patient knows they rarely follow a normal sleep cycle. They’re often up during the night and are not easily coaxed back to bed.

One study has shown that blue light can help Alzheimer’s patients to sleep better. The experiment used LED light on table light fixtures and exposed it to four patients in a nursing home facility. The common room contained a similar light fixture and patients who came in this room were exposed to red light or blue light.

Their body temperatures were monitored and sleep observations were made for four nights towards the end of the testing period. The patients that stayed in front of the blue light fixture, for even a small amount of time, slept better. Their nightly decline in body temperature was delayed by two hours as a result of the blue light. body temperature is high during the day and cools at night. Researchers correlated a lower body temperature with a good night’s sleep. The theory behind this study is that blue light helps delay the circadian clock, their internal clock, so the patients would stay asleep longer.

For patients with Alzheimer’s, it means that exposing them to blue light will allow for better sleep and sleeping at the appropriate times. Although, it is sometimes difficult to convince Alzheimer’s patients to sit with a blue light for any duration of time.
One way to approach this problem is to allow a table to act as a source of blue light; the table top can be a flat-screen TV that radiates a bright, bluish light, and patients can sit near this. Many patients sit at the table and stay wide awake for the whole day. Researchers believe that bluish light wakes up the circadian system in a person with Alzheimer’s. In turn, they will sleep through the night. These patients are much calmer and happier with a reduction in irritability and experience less wandering around the vicinity. The more a patient spent time at the table, the more improvement was observed by the researchers.

It would be worth looking into providing a blue light source for your loved one with Alzheimer’s if he/she is having trouble regulating their sleep schedule. You may be able to purchase a blue light at a hardware store or online.