

What is Insomnia?

Insomnia is not being able to fall asleep or stay asleep or having sleep that isn't restful. It may make it difficult to focus and may also affect your health, relationships, and work.



WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE?

Insomnia affects your ability to get a good night's rest. Some symptoms of insomnia include:

- Trouble falling or staying asleep
- Waking up multiple times during the night
- Waking up too early
- Worrying or being stressed about sleeping
- Not feeling rested, even with having enough time for sleep



WHAT CAUSES IT?

Insomnia can be caused by many things. Common causes of insomnia include: stress or anxiety, pain, shift work or jet lag. Some health problems and medicines can contribute to insomnia.

Medical conditions that may affect your sleep:

- Heart or breathing problems
- Overactive thyroid
- Anxiety/PTSD
- Stomach disease
- Diabetes
- Pregnancy

Medications that may impact your sleep:

- Medicines for seizures
- Water pills
- Depression medications
- Steroids
- Medicines for Attention Deficit Disorder

Tell your health professional or pharmacist if you think a health condition or medicine may be affecting your sleep. Sometimes it can be due to poor sleep habits. Alcohol, caffeine, nicotine and street drugs can also impair your sleep. Finding the cause of insomnia can help you better know how to treat it.

HOW CAN I GET BETTER?

LIFESTYLE CHANGES

Sleep Hygiene. Sleep hygiene is the first and most important intervention to consider. It means taking a look at the daily habits that can help your body recognize when it is time to be awake and when it is time for sleep.

Here are a few sleep hygiene tips that may improve your sleep:

- Have a bedtime routine with a consistent time you go to bed and wake up
- Use your bedroom only for sleep or sex (i.e. don't do work in bed)
- Keep your bedroom cool, quiet and dark
- Avoid doing stressful activities before bed
- Turn off screens about 1 hour before bed (e.g. TVs, phones, computers)
- Avoid caffeine late in the day (best to avoid after noon)
- Do not use alcohol to help you fall asleep
- If you can't fall asleep within 30 min get up and do something relaxing or tedious
- Do relaxing activities before bed

Exercise regularly. Exercising daily may improve your sleep and make it more restful. It also may help you lose weight and improve overall health, which will also help your sleep. Avoid exercising in the evening.

COUNSELING

Counseling may be helpful for insomnia that is related to depression, anxiety or PTSD. Counselors may use different forms of therapy to help you learn relaxation and coping. Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) can be especially effective for sleep problems.

HERBAL MEDICINES AND SUPPLEMENTS

Melatonin is a supplement which may help with problems falling asleep (for example caused by shift work or jet lag). Take 0.5 to 3 mg 1 hour before bed. Valerian root extract is an herbal medicine which can also help. You should take this about 2 hours before bedtime. Lavender oil on your pillow and warm chamomile tea may help relax and calm you before going to sleep.

MIND-BODY THERAPIES

These therapies can help you quiet your thoughts and promote relaxation.

Guided Imagery: Listening to a CD or podcast of guided imagery can help with falling asleep. You can find these for free on the Internet.

For more information, scan the QR code below, or visit nciph.org/insomnia



