

INSOMNIA

Insomnia is trouble falling asleep or staying asleep throughout the night. Insomnia is also described as a condition of waking up in the morning, not feeling refreshed.

Insomnia is the most common sleep complaint; it is higher in older population and women. In acute type, sleep problems are for one to several nights (usually for less than 3 weeks). When insomnia persists for longer than a month, it is considered chronic. Lack of sleep can result in fatigue, memory and concentration problems, depression, sickness and injury at work or while driving.

CAUSES:

Insomnia can be caused or make it worse by poor sleep hygiene such as:

- Going to bed at different times each night
- Taking a nap during daytime
- Too much noise or light in the bed room
- Being awake in bed for a long time before trying to fall asleep
- Working evening or night shifts
- Not getting enough exercise
- Watching television, using computer or texting on the phone while in bed

Insomnia can also be a cause of:

- An underlying medical condition
- Generalized pain
- Digestive problems
- Depression or anxiety
- Or a primary sleep disorder like Restless legs syndrome

Other causes of insomnia:

- Alcohol or other stimulant drugs
- Smoking
- Consumption of caffeine, late in the day
- Medications used for heart disease, thyroid disease, asthma, depression and birth control

SYMPTOMS:

Symptoms of insomnia include:

- difficulty to fall asleep
- waking up several times during the night
- difficulty going back to sleep after waking up in the middle of the night
- early morning awakening
- unrefreshed sleep

- daytime sleepiness
- difficulty concentrating
- irritability

TREATMENT:

Untreated insomnia will lead to increased illness or morbidity. Treatment can involve the following:

- **Sleep hygiene.**
- **Relaxation.**
- **Change thoughts about sleep.**
- **Don't be a clock watcher.**
- **Restrict the time in bed.**
- **Get out of bed.**, After 20 minutes of trying to fall asleep, get out of bed for 20 minutes and do something relaxing (such as reading, DO NOT television!). Then try again, repeating the 20 minutes in bed, 20 minutes out of bed cycle. **This intervention has proven to be the most successful of all.**
- **Medication.** Medications are usually not recommended for people with insomnia. However, in select cases it proves useful when used for a short period of time and in combination with some of the above treatments.

Tips that will help you sleep well:

During the day:

- Drink less or no caffeine, avoid caffeine late in the day
- Avoid alcohol and nicotine close to bedtime
- Exercise, but not within three hours before bedtime
- Avoid naps during the day, especially in the late afternoon or evening
- Maintain a sleep diary to identify your sleep patterns that you can share with your doctor

At night:

- Use the bed and bedroom for sleep and sex only
- Develop a regular bedtime routine and a regular sleep-wake schedule
- Do not eat or drink at bedtime
- Dark, cool and comfortable bed room
- Use a bedside fan to block out disturbing sounds