

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT INSOMNIA

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What is insomnia?

Insomnia is a medical condition in which a person can have trouble falling asleep, trouble staying asleep, waking up too early, or having poor quality of sleep. Not getting enough sleep can affect a person's coordination, memory, and thinking skills. People do not always know why they have insomnia, but the following are some common causes:

- Stress
- Caffeine
- Alcohol
- Distractions or disruptive sleep environment
- Changes in work schedules
- Pain or other symptoms from health conditions

What are the symptoms?

- Problems with falling asleep
- Trouble staying asleep or trouble returning to sleep after waking throughout the night
- Waking up too early
- Not feeling refreshed or rested after sleep
- Feeling sleepy throughout the day
- Having trouble concentrating or paying attention
- Falling asleep at unusual times

How is it diagnosed?

Your doctor will ask about your sleep and medical history. He or she may order blood tests to see if there is an underlying condition causing insomnia and ask you to keep a sleep diary. A sleep diary helps keep track of your sleep and other factors that could be causing insomnia.

How is it treated?

Treatment depends on many factors and can be as easy as changing your sleep habits. Your doctor may ask you to try to follow good sleep habits to see if there is an improvement in sleep. Good sleep habits include:



- Keeping a consistent bed time and waking time
- Spending no more than 8 hours in bed
- Trying not to force sleep and avoid watching the clock
- Keeping your bedroom quiet and dark
- Removing anything that may disrupt sleep (such as a television, telephone, or computer)
- Avoiding caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol before bedtime

Bottom Line

- Insomnia can have multiple causes. Talk with your doctor to better understand what causes your sleep problems.
- Keeping a sleep diary can help you and your doctor to understand your sleep patterns and habits.
- Insomnia can be treated and resolved. Treatment for insomnia depends on the cause.
- Many people improve simply by changing sleep habits.

For More Information

www.acponline.org/patients_families/products/brochures/sleepguide.pdf
American College of Physicians

www.sleepeducation.com
American Academy of Sleep Medicine

www.behavioralsleep.org/Default.aspx
Society of Behavioral Sleep Medicine

www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/inso/
National Heart Lung and Blood Institute

www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/sleepdisorders.html
National Library of Medicine

