

## insomnia

Insomnia is when you are unable to fall asleep when you first go to bed, or you wake during the night or early in the morning and are unable to go back to sleep. This can happen occasionally or habitually. The amount of sleep required is individual, and one person may need only half the amount of sleep another person needs. Most adults need on average eight hours sleep to awake refreshed and feeling that they can operate with efficiency.

Indications that you have insomnia include:

- Not sleeping when you go to bed
- Waking during the night and not returning to sleep
- Waking early in the morning and not returning to sleep
- Waking unrefreshed
- Irritability
- Daytime sleepiness
- Decreased ability to perform creative or repetitive tasks

Appearance of the following means you should consult your medical or health professional:

- Personality changes such as short temper, irritability
- Changes in other aspects of health
- Compromised ability to perform activities

The causes of insomnia can be:

- Low blood sugar levels
- Muscle aches
- Indigestion
- Breathing problems
- Physical pain
- Anxiety
- Stress
- Grief
- Depression
- Caffeine consumption
- Pharmaceutical and recreational drugs
- Sedentary lifestyle
- Environmental noise
- Temperature (either excess hot or cold)
- Change in surroundings
- Alterations in sleep pattern
- Hormone fluctuations
- Restless leg syndrome
- Smoking
- Excess sleep during the daytime

When you have insomnia you should avoid:

- Alcohol

- Tobacco
- Caffeine
- Excess sleep during the day
- Staying in bed if you are not sleepy - get up and move to another room to read or watch television until really sleepy
- Routine disruptions

To prevent the occurrence of insomnia try strategies such as:

- Decreasing the intake of caffeinated drinks after lunch
- Keeping meals small and frequent after lunch
- Ensuring you exercise daily, but not just before bed
- Using relaxation techniques (refer to Emotion link)
- Not smoking before bed
- Establishing a set of consistent bedtime habits
- Going to bed only when you are sleepy
- Avoiding clock watching while in bed
- Getting up and going to another room to read or watch television until you are really sleepy if you are not sleepy whilst in bed
- Using the bedroom only for sleep and sex
- Getting out of bed at the same time each day no matter what type of sleep you had that night
- Not taking a nap during the day if that is not what you would normally do
- Taking a warm relaxing bath shortly before bedtime
- Ensuring the room is comfortable - not excessively hot or cold
- Using earplugs if noise disturbs you, or use 'white noise' such as meditative music or ocean surf if you are quite sensitive
- Ensuring that curtains block out sufficient light or use an eye mask

## insomnia (contd.)

There are some pharmaceutical medications available over the counter which can help with insomnia. Consult your medical or health professional to make sure they do not interact with your other prescribed medications.

Any additional supplements considered for treatment should be discussed for suitability with your medical or health professional as there may be interactions with other medications.

Additional supplements include:

- Chamomile tea - has mild sedative properties
- Valerian - has sedative properties

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*The information provided assists in self-management and is intended as recommendations only. For more information please see your medical or health professional.*



University of  
South Australia