



## What is insomnia?

Insomnia is a common sleep disorder in which you may have trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or getting good quality sleep. This happens even though you have the time and the right environment to sleep well. Insomnia interferes with your daily activities and may make you feel unrested, moody, or sleepy during the day.

## What contributes to insomnia?

- irregular sleep schedule or changing your normal routine often.
- interruptions in your sleep, such as waking up often to care for a baby.
- Frequent long naps during the day.
- Too little physical activity during the day.
- Caffeine, nicotine, alcohol, or street drugs.
- Watching TV or using electronic devices close to your bedtime.
- Stress or worrying.
- Female gender. Insomnia is more common in women than in men. Feeling uncomfortable and experiencing hormonal changes during pregnancy and menopause can cause problems with sleep.
- Age. Insomnia can occur at any age but your chances of having it increase as you get older.
- Genetics. Insomnia sometimes runs in families. Your genes may also affect whether you are a deep or light sleeper.
- Environmental factors:
  - Shift or night work.
  - Noise or light during the night.

- Uncomfortably high or low temperatures.
- Traveling frequently to different time zones.

### **What are the signs and symptoms of insomnia?**

- **Lying awake for a long time** before you fall asleep. This is more common in younger adults.
- **Sleeping for only short periods.** You may wake up often during the night or be awake for most of the night. This is the most common symptom and affects mostly older adults.
- **Waking up too early in the morning** and not be able to get back to sleep.
- **Having poor-quality sleep.** You may wake up feeling unrested, and you may feel sleepy during the day. You may also have trouble focusing on tasks. Insomnia can cause you to feel anxious, depressed, or irritable.

### **What are the complications of insomnia:**

Sleep is important for your body and mind. In the short term, insomnia can make it hard to concentrate or think clearly. You may feel irritable, sad, and unrested or have headaches. Insomnia raises your risk of falling, having a road accident, or missing work.

In addition, chronic insomnia can affect how well your brain, heart, and other parts of your body work. It can raise your risk of certain health problems or make existing problems worse. These conditions include:

- **Breathing problems** such as asthma.
- **Heart problems** such as arrhythmia, heart failure, coronary heart disease, and high blood pressure
- **Mental health conditions** such as anxiety, depression, and thoughts of suicide. Insomnia can also make it difficult for you to stick to treatment for a substance use disorder.

- **Pain.** People who have chronic pain and insomnia may become more aware of and distressed by their pain.
- **Pregnancy complications** such as having more pain during labor, giving birth preterm, needing a cesarean section (C-section), and having a baby with low birth weight.
- **Problems with your immune system,** your body's natural defense against germs and sickness. These problems can lead to inflammation in your body or make it harder to fight infections.
- **Problems with your** metabolism. Not getting enough sleep can change the levels of hormones that control hunger and how you break down food. This can raise the risk of overweight and obesity, metabolic syndrome, and diabetes.

### **How do we diagnose insomnia?**

To diagnose insomnia, your health care provider may ask about your sleep habits and ask you to keep a sleep diary. Your provider may recommend healthy lifestyle habits such as a regular sleep schedule, cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia, and medicines to help you manage your insomnia. Short-term insomnia may be caused by stress or changes in your schedule or environment. It can last for a few days or weeks. Chronic (long-term) insomnia occurs 3 or more nights a week, lasts more than 3 months, and cannot be fully explained by another health problem or a medicine.

Your provider will want to learn about your signs and symptoms, risk factors, medication, health history, and family health history. Your provider will do a physical exam to rule out other medical problems that might affect your sleep. They will listen to your heart and lungs and look for risk factors for sleep apnea, such as large tonsils or a large neck circumference. In addition to finding out your medical history, your provider may order blood tests to check for medical conditions that can affect sleep. They may also order a sleep study to look for other sleep problems.

## How do we treat insomnia?

Insomnia is treated with lifestyle changes, cognitive behavioral therapy, and medications. You may need one, or a combination of these therapies.

- **Lifestyle changes that can improve sleep:**

- Avoiding caffeine for 8 hours before bedtime.
- Avoiding tobacco or other forms of nicotine prior to bedtime.
- Avoiding alcohol before bedtime. Alcohol can cause you to wake from sleep.
- Reducing water intake prior to bedtime, so you do not have to wake up to urinate.
- Avoiding large meals prior to bedtime.
- Avoiding all screens and the TV monitor for 2 hours before bedtime.
- Reserving your bed for sleeping and sexual activity only.
- Maintain a sleep schedule where you go to bed and wake up at consistent times.
- Avoiding midday napping.
- Making sure your mattress and pillows are comfortable.
- Keeping your bedroom quiet, dark, and cool.
- Using a sound machine or white noise machine.
- Doing deep breathing, meditation, or relaxation techniques prior to bedtime.

If you cannot fall asleep, get up and do something else until you feel relaxed and ready to try your bedtime routine again

- **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I)**

CBT-I is a short and structured evidence-based therapy in which a trained professional helps you to develop new thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that relate to sleep with the goal of creating a healthier pattern of sleep.

- **Over-the-counter medicines and supplements**

- Some over-the-counter (OTC) products that contain antihistamines are sold as sleep aids. Although these products might make you sleepy, talk to your provider before taking them. Antihistamines can be unsafe for some people. Also, these products may not be the best treatment for your insomnia. Your provider can advise you whether these products will help you.
- Melatonin is a dietary supplement. It is a lab-made version of the sleep hormone melatonin. Many people take melatonin supplements to improve their sleep. However, research has not proven that melatonin is an effective treatment for insomnia. Talk to your provider before using supplements. Dietary supplements can be beneficial to your health, but they can also have health risks. Side effects of melatonin may include daytime sleepiness, headaches, upset stomach, and worsening depression. It can also affect your body's control of blood pressure, causing high or low blood pressure.

- **Prescription medicines**

Many prescription medicines are used to treat insomnia. Some are meant for short-term use while others are meant for longer-term use. Some insomnia medicines can lead to addiction and all of these medicines may cause dizziness, drowsiness, or worsening of depression or suicidal thoughts. Talk to your provider about the benefits and side effects of insomnia medicines.

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Adapted from: NHLBI. <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/insomnia>

Reviewer: Heather Vance MD

Plain Language Editor: Ruti Volk, MSI, AHIP

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