

Insomnia



What Is Insomnia?

Insomnia is a common health problem. People with insomnia don't sleep very well. This can mean they have trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or both. Insomnia can come and go or be long-lasting. Some common causes are:

- Stress
- Drinking alcohol
- Drinking coffee, tea, soda, energy drinks, or other drinks with caffeine close to bedtime
- Depression
- Loud or distracting sleep environment
- Changes in schedule
- Pain or other symptoms from health conditions



What Are the Warning Signs of Insomnia?

Some symptoms of insomnia can include:

- Trouble falling asleep or staying asleep
- Waking up too early
- Not feeling rested after sleep
- Feeling sleepy during the day
- Trouble concentrating or paying attention
- Falling asleep at unusual times



How Is Insomnia Diagnosed?

Your doctor will ask about your sleep and medical history. He or she may ask you about your habits related to sleep, like if you drink alcohol or if you exercise.



How Is Insomnia Treated?

A first step in treating insomnia is cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). Depending on what your sleep problems are, other treatments may include lifestyle changes and medicines.

- **Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT).** CBT, or talk therapy, helps you learn about your sleep habits and how to improve them. It can also help you cope with stress or anxiety, which can make sleep worse. CBT can include one-on-one sessions or group therapy. CBT may also be given through the phone, internet, or books.
- **Lifestyle changes.** Try to create a bedtime routine that helps you relax. This may include taking a bath, reading a book, or light stretching. Exercising during the day can help you sleep better at night. Some habits make insomnia worse, like drinking alcohol, caffeine, or smoking cigarettes. Looking at electronic screens in bed, such as cell phones or lap tops, can also make insomnia worse. It is best to avoid these when you have trouble sleeping.
- **Medicines.** Medicine can be added to CBT for people with long-term insomnia. These medicines can be prescription or over-the-counter. Prescription medicines should only be taken for a short time, usually 4 to 5 weeks. These medicines can have side effects. Talk with your doctor about how to use these medicines safely.

Insomnia



Questions for My Doctor

- What treatment is best for me?
- How can CBT help me?
- What if CBT doesn't work for me?
- Will herbal medicines help me sleep?
- Do any of the medicines I take affect sleep?
- How can I find a therapist who will help my insomnia?
- How can I safely use medicines for sleep?
- Do I have to sleep 8 hours every night to be healthy?
- Do I have a health condition that is causing my insomnia?



Bottom Line

- Insomnia is a common health problem that causes people to have trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or both. Poor sleep can cause problems in your day-to-day life.
- Common symptoms of insomnia include trouble falling asleep, trouble staying asleep, and waking up too early.
- Insomnia should be treated with therapy and lifestyle changes first. Medicines can be added in severe cases of insomnia.

For More Information

- **ACP:** https://www.acponline.org/system/files/documents/patients_families/products/brochures/sleepguide.pdf
- **National Institutes of Health:** <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/inso>

Notes:
