

Insomnia

Insomnia is a sleep disorder that includes trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or waking too early, resulting in daytime impairment. It is a common problem, usually occurring along with other diseases or emotional stress (**comorbid insomnia**). It can also exist without other medical or mental health causes (**primary insomnia**). Long-standing (**chronic**) insomnia can lead to daytime consequences such as fatigue or sleepiness, difficulty with thinking, and mood impairments, which can interfere with performance at school and work.

RISK FACTORS FOR INSOMNIA

- Age older than 60 years
- History of mental health disorders including depression, generalized anxiety disorder, and posttraumatic stress disorder
- Emotional stress
- Working at night or in shifts
- Traveling through different time zones



PREVENTION

- Go to sleep and get up at the same time every day.
- If you are having a hard time falling asleep, leave the bedroom and engage in a quiet activity until you feel sleepy. Return to bed to try to sleep again.
- Avoid drinking caffeinated beverages during the 8 hours before your bedtime. Also avoid eating heavy meals immediately before sleep and drinking alcohol close to bedtime.
- Create a calming environment when you go to sleep.
- Although exercise can help you sleep better, avoid exercising immediately prior to your bedtime.
- Do not use your bed for work or other activities; use it only for sleep or sex.

TREATMENT

- If the problem is comorbid insomnia, treat the associated disorder in addition to focusing on insomnia.
- If sleep hygiene changes are not successful, your physician may suggest **cognitive behavioral therapy**, which modifies sleep behaviors and explores your attitudes toward and thoughts about sleep.
- Several prescription medications are available for insomnia, but these should be used only under the guidance of physicians and only for a short period.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Cleveland Clinic
my.clevelandclinic.org/disorders/insomnia/hic_insomnia.aspx
- National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute
www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/inso/treatment.html

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Sources: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute; Cleveland Clinic

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