

# Insomnia

Results of Insomnia	What Leads to Insomnia	What maintains insomnia?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Physiological arousal</li> <li>■ Worrisome thinking</li> <li>■ Anxiety</li> <li>■ Depression</li> <li>■ Family conflict</li> <li>■ Work problems</li> <li>■ Loss of motivation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Acute stress</li> <li>■ Personal loss (death, separation, divorce, etc)</li> <li>■ Medical problems</li> <li>■ Work problems</li> <li>■ Family problems</li> <li>■ Irregular sleep schedule</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Inaccurate thoughts about sleep</li> <li>■ Sleeping pills</li> <li>■ Myths about duration of sleep</li> <li>■ Daytime napping</li> <li>■ Excess time in bed</li> <li>■ Performance anxiety</li> <li>■ Medications for health problems</li> </ul>

## How can I improve my sleep? Change your sleep behavior

### Go To Bed Only When You Are Sleepy

There is no reason to go to bed if you are not sleepy. When you go to bed too early, it only gives you more time to become frustrated. Individuals often ponder the events of the day, plan the next day's schedule, or worry about their inability to fall to sleep. These behaviors are incompatible with sleep, and tend to perpetuate insomnia. You should therefore delay your bedtime until you are sleepy. This may mean that you go to bed later than your scheduled bedtime. However, stick to your scheduled rising time regardless of the time you go to bed.

### Get Out of Bed when You Can't Fall Asleep or Cannot Go Back to Sleep in 15 Min

When you recognize that you've become a clockwatcher, get out of bed. If you wake up during your sleep and you've tried falling back to sleep for 15 minutes and can't, get out of bed. Remember, the goal is to fall to sleep quickly. Return to bed only when you are sleepy (i.e., yawning, head bobbing, eyes closing, concentration decreasing). The goal is for you to reconnect your bed with sleeping rather than frustration. You will have to repeat this step as often as necessary.

### Use Your Bed or Bedroom for Sleep and Sex Only

The purpose of this guideline is to associate your bedroom with sleep rather than wakefulness. Just as you may associate the kitchen with hunger, this guideline will help you associate sleep and pleasure with your bedroom. Follow this rule both during the day and at night. DO NOT watch TV, listen to the radio, eat or read in bed. You may have to temporarily move the t.v. or radio from your bedroom to help you regain a stable sleep cycle.

## Sleep Hygiene Guidelines to Improve your Sleep Behavior

### 1. NO CAFFEINE: No caffeine 6-8 hours before bedtime

Yep, its true caffeine disturbs sleep; even for people who do not think they experience a stimulation effect. Individuals with insomnia are often more sensitive to mild stimulants than normal sleepers. Caffeine is found in items such as coffee, tea, soda, chocolate, and many over-the-counter medications (e.g., Excedrin).

### 2. AVOID NICOTINE: Avoid nicotine before bedtime

Nicotine is a stimulant. It is a myth that smoking helps you "relax." As nicotine builds in the system it produces an effect similar to caffeine. DO NOT smoke to get yourself back to sleep.

### 3. AVOID ALCOHOL: Avoid alcohol after dinner

Alcohol often promotes the onset of sleep, but as alcohol is metabolized sleep becomes disturbed and fragmented. Thus, a large amount of alcohol is a poor sleep aid and should not be used as such. Limit alcohol use to small quantities to moderate quantities.

### 4. NO SLEEPING PILLS: Sleep medications are effective only temporarily

Scientists have shown that sleep medications lose their effectiveness in about 2 - 4 weeks when taken regularly. Over time, sleeping pills actually make sleep problems worse. When sleeping pills have been used for a long period, withdrawal from the medication can lead to an insomnia rebound. Thus, after long-term use, many individuals incorrectly conclude that they "need" sleeping pills in order to sleep normally.

### 5. REGULAR EXERCISE: Preferably 40 minutes each day

Exercise in the late afternoon or early evening can aid sleep, although the positive effect often takes several weeks to become noticeable. Do not exercise within 2 hours of bedtime because it may elevate your nervous system activity and interfere with falling asleep.

### 6. BEDROOM ENVIRONMENT: Moderate temperature, quiet, dark and comfortable

Extremes of heat or cold can disrupt sleep. Noises can be masked with background white noise (such as the noise of a fan) or with earplugs. Bedrooms may be darkened with black-out shades or sleep masks can be worn. Position clocks out-of-sight since clock-watching can increase worry about the effects of lack of sleep. Be sure your mattress is not too soft or too firm and that your pillow is the right height and firmness.

### 7. EATING

You should avoid the following foods at bedtime: anything caffeinated like chocolate, peanuts, beans, most raw fruits and vegetables (they may cause gas), and high-fat foods such as potato chips or corn chips. Be especially careful to avoid heavy meals and spices in the evening. Do not go to bed too hungry or too full. Avoid snacks in the middle of the night because awakening may become associated with hunger. A light bedtime snack, such a glass of warm milk, cheese, or a bowl of cereal can promote sleep.

## 8. AVOID NAPS

The sleep you obtain during the day takes away from your sleep needed at night resulting in lighter, more restless sleep, difficulty falling asleep or early morning awakening. If you must nap, keep it brief, and try to schedule it before 3:00 pm. It is best to set an alarm to ensure you don't sleep more than 15-30 minutes.

## 9. UNWIND

Allow yourself at least an hour before bedtime to wind down. The brain is not a light switch that you can instantly cut on and off. Most of us cannot expect to go full speed till 10:00 pm then fall peacefully to sleep at 10:30 pm. Take a hot bath, read a novel, watch some TV, or have a pleasant talk with your spouse or kids. Find what works for you and make it your routine before bed. Be sure not to struggle with a problem, get into an argument before bed or anything else that increases your body's arousal.

## 10. REGULAR SLEEP SCHEDULE

Spending excessive time in bed has two unfortunate consequences - (1) you begin to associate your bedroom with arousal and frustration and (2) your sleep actually becomes shallow. Surprisingly, it is very important that you cut down your sleep time in order to improve sleep! Set the alarm clock and get out of bed at the same time each morning, weekdays and weekends, regardless of your bedtime or the amount of sleep you obtained on the previous night. You probably will be tempted to stay in bed if you did not sleep well, but try to maintain your new schedule. This guideline is designed to regulate your internal biological clock and reset your sleep-wake rhythm.

It usually takes 2-3 months for a sleep problem to get totally better, but most people see improvements within 2-3 weeks if they consistently follow the guidelines.