

# ***Insomnia***

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Most people have trouble sleeping on occasion. However, some people have trouble more often. They find it hard to fall asleep, don't sleep soundly, or wake up early and can't go back to sleep. If you do this, you have **insomnia**.

## ***Causes***

The most common cause of insomnia is a change in daily routine or anticipation of an event. For example, traveling, starting a new job, an exam or huge class project deadline, or starting a new relationship may cause sleep problems. This type of insomnia usually doesn't last for more than a few days.

Is there something going on in your life that is causing you some anxiety?

Insomnia that lasts for more than a few days may be related to a more serious problem. Chronic insomnia may result from illnesses that cause pain, nausea or shortness of breath.

Depression or anxiety may also cause chronic insomnia. If insomnia lasts for more than a few days, a clinician should be consulted.



## ***Treatment***

Insomnia related to things going on in your life may go away on its own. But chronic insomnia, which may be a sign of another illness such as depression or anxiety, may require special treatment. Proper treatment of the depression or other illness often helps the insomnia go away.

Even if the exact cause of insomnia can't be identified, treatment for your insomnia may help. Treatment may consist of doing certain things that will help you improve your sleep habits and help you sleep better, or it may include medication prescribed by your doctor.



## ***Remedies***

Some practices that may help you sleep better are listed below:

- Go to bed at the same time each day.
- Get up at the same time each day.
- Exercise regularly every day, but not right before bedtime.
- Keep the temperature in your bedroom comfortable and allow for fresh air.
- Keep the bedroom quiet when sleeping.
- Keep the bedroom dark enough.
- Use your bed only for sleep, not studying!
- Take medicines only as directed.
- When you go to bed, use a relaxation technique.

While these suggestions seem simple, college students overlook many of them. Evaluate your own habits. Are you able to achieve these healthy practices?

## ***Other Reminders***

The following can make insomnia worse.

- Exercising or engaging in stimulating activity, like watching a scary movie, just before bed.
- Drinking caffeine. Remember that caffeine is present in chocolate, as well as regular coffee or tea, and most sodas.
- Drinking alcohol, which can cause early wakening.
- Reading, studying, or doing homework on the bed. If the bed is used for major studying, your body will not take the cue when it's time for sleeping, not studying.
- Tossing and turning when you can't sleep. Instead, get up and do a quiet, relaxation activity. Don't lie in bed awake for more than 30 minutes.

Source: American Academy of Family Physicians

