

# Coping with Insomnia



## What is Insomnia?

*Insomnia includes but not limits to: Sleepiness during the day, general tiredness, irritability, problems with concentration or memory, difficulty in going to sleep, frequent nighttime awakenings, and waking too early.*

*It may be caused by worry, stress, or excitement. This begins a cycle of heightened arousal. The frustration of not being able to sleep adds to the arousal.*

## What to do about it?

### 1. Bed Rituals:

- Try to go to sleep at the same time each night and get up at the same time each morning.
- Try not to take naps during the day, because naps may make you less sleepy at night.
- Make your bedroom comfortable.
- Be sure that it is dark, quiet, and not too warm or too cold. If light is a problem, try a sleeping mask.
- If noise is a problem, try earplugs, a fan, or a “white noise” machine to cover up the sounds.
- Read a book, listen to music, or take a bath.

### 2. Nutrition:

- Avoid caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol late in the day.
- Alcohol can cause waking in the night and interferes with sleep quality.
- Don't eat a heavy meal late in the day.
- A light snack before bedtime, however, may help you sleep

### 3. Physical:

- Get regular exercise. Try not to exercise close to bedtime. Experts suggest not exercising for at least three to four hours before the time you go to sleep.

### 4. Avoid using your bed for anything other than sleep or sex.

### 5. If you can't fall asleep and don't feel drowsy, get up and read or do something that is not overly stimulating until you feel sleepy.

### 6. If you find yourself lying awake worrying about things, try making a to-do list before you go to bed. This may help you to not focus on those worries overnight.

### 7. Avoid watching 11:00PM news (or 10:00PM) because every fire, murder, and rape within a 70mile radius gets reported.

### 8. Paradoxical intention. Try keeping your eyes open in the dark.

### 9. Visit a health care provider to get a physical checkup.

## 7 Myth about insomnia

### Myth 1. A Drink Will Help You Sleep

This myth probably persists because alcohol can help you fall asleep. But as it moves through your body it may lead to disturbed, restless sleep, or it may make you wake earlier.

### Myth 2. Insomnia Is Strictly Mental

As a matter of fact, stress is the No. 1 reason people report a lack of sleep. But it's not the only insomnia trigger. Many things can cause insomnia, including poor sleep hygiene, illness, drug side effects, chronic pain, restless legs syndrome, or sleep apnea.

### Myth 3. Screen Time Helps You Wind Down

It's tempting to try to wind down by reading on the computer or watching TV before bed, but both can actually stimulate you. You want your melatonin levels to increase around bedtime to help you fall asleep. Try listening to relaxing music or download a relaxing, sleep app.

### Myth 4. Sleep Aids Are Risk-Free

It's true that today's sleeping pills are safer and more effective than many older drugs. But all medications have potential risks, including the risks of dependency. Always talk to your doctor before using sleeping pills. Some sleep aids can help relieve insomnia symptoms temporarily. They can't cure insomnia.

### Myth 5. You Can Make Up For Lost Sleep

Sleeping in one or two days a week or over the weekend may actually upset your natural body clock. The disruption may make it harder to get to sleep the next time. The only way to catch up on lost sleep is to get back into a regular sleep schedule.

### Myth 6. Napping Helps Offset Insomnia

Naps affect everyone differently. For some people, a brief 10- to 20-minute nap taken midday can be refreshing. For many people with insomnia, however, a late afternoon nap can decrease the brain's sleep drive. That can make it even harder to fall asleep at night.

### Myth 7. You'll learn to Need Less Sleep.

Believing this myth can lead to serious consequences. Everyone is born with a set sleep need. Most adults need 7-8 hours. Being chronically tired can have serious consequences, including poor work performance, an increased risk of accidents, and even poor health.

(Smith, M. W. (2014). Slideshow: Insomnia Myths and Facts.

Retrieved from: <http://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/living-with-insomnia-11/slideshow-insomnia>)

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It's **FREE** and confidential.