

Title: Insomnia: Treatment before medication

Author: Caroline Smith

Date: October 6, 2009

Key words: insomnia, sleep hygiene, behavioral therapy, difficulty sleeping, sleeplessness

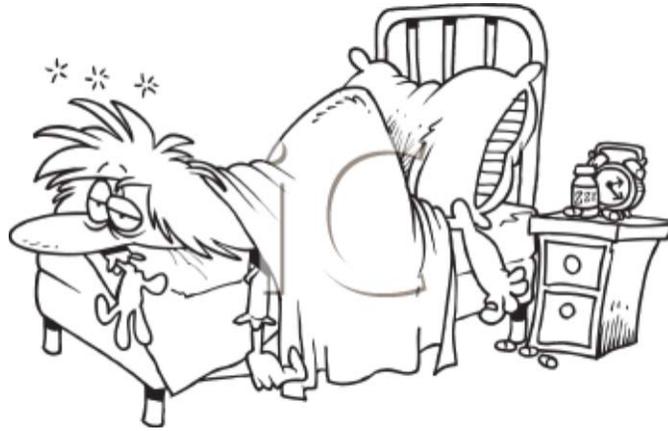
Abstract: Insomnia is a common problem facing as many as half of American adults. It includes difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep, and early morning awakenings. It can be caused by medications, medical conditions, and poor sleep hygiene. Mild insomnia can be effectively managed by lifestyle changes and behavioral therapy. Pharmacologic therapy is appropriate for some patients as adjunctive therapy or for those with severe symptoms.

This document was created by a medical student enrolled in the Primary Care Clerkship at the University of Minnesota Medical School as part of the course project. The aim of the project is to present information on a medical topic in the format of a patient education handout. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Minnesota Medical School physicians and faculty. These materials are provided for informational purposes only and are in no way intended to take the place of the advice and recommendations of your personal health care provider. The information provided may no longer be up to date since it has not been reviewed since the date of creation. The information provided should not be used to diagnose a health problem or disease, or as a means of determining treatment. In the event of a medical emergency, immediately contact a doctor or call 911.

Insomnia

What you can do to help you sleep!

As many as 50% of American adults have difficulty sleeping.



Some things you may not know...

- Older people have more sleep problems because of natural changes, medical conditions, and multiple medications.
- Some cold medications, heart and blood pressure medications, and antidepressants can cause insomnia
- Changing sleep habits can be as effective as medication in patients with mild symptoms

Things YOU can do to improve your sleep...

1. Use your bed only for sleeping ...don't read or watch TV in your bed
2. If you can't fall asleep, leave your bedroom and do something else...once you are tired go back to sleep.
3. Don't use alcohol for sleep...it may help you fall asleep but will wake you up more in the middle of the night
4. Avoid caffeine, nicotine, heavy meals, and heavy exercise before bed
5. Wake up at the same time every morning, no matter what time you go to sleep
6. Exercise daily...but not right before bed

You may have a ¹medical condition affecting your sleep if...

- You are overweight, snore loudly, and are very sleepy during the day
- You are getting up multiple times during the night to pee

Medications can be used as a short-term solution to get you back on track. It can be used long term but because of increased cost and side effects should be used in more severe cases.

All information was taken from: Ringdahl EN, Pereira SL, Delzell JE. Treatment of Primary Insomnia. Journal of the American Board of Family Physicians. 17(3) 2004.