

Title: Insomnia

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Abstract: Insomnia is a common problem in primary care. There are many different medications, both prescription and over-the-counter available for its treatment. This patient education tool describes the causes and diagnosis of insomnia. It also discusses options for treatment, focusing on the non-pharmacological option of sleep hygiene.

Do I have insomnia?

Insomnia can cause:

- Hard time falling asleep
- Waking up many times during the night
- Waking up too early in the morning

Most adults need 7-8 hours of sleep a night. If you don't get enough sleep at night you can feel tired during the day.

Many people can occasionally have a hard time sleeping. If it lasts for more than a few weeks, you may have insomnia.



References:

UpToDate for Patients (2010)
MedlinePlus
(www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000805.htm)

Developed by Allison Clark

Patient Education Tool
Primary Care Clerkship
University of Minnesota



Sleep Disorders and Insomnia

How can I get a good night's sleep?

Patient Education Tool
Primary Care Clerkship

What causes insomnia?

There are many different reasons why you may not be sleeping well. Things that can cause you to not be able to sleep include:

- Stress
- Caffeine
- Alcohol
- Depression
- Working long hours
- Bad sleeping environment

What will my doctor ask me?

Your doctor will want to know when you go to bed and when you get up. Your doctor may ask about medicine, alcohol, and caffeine that you take. They will want you to share what events are going on in your life. Your doctor may also ask you to keep a diary to keep track of your sleep: when you go to bed, when you fall asleep, how often you woke up at night, and what time you woke up in the morning.



How can insomnia be treated?

Often you and your doctor can treat the problem that is causing you to sleep poorly. Sometimes changing different things you do during the day and before bed can help you sleep better.

If your insomnia continues, your doctor may talk with you about different medication options. Sleeping pills can help in some cases, but can be unsafe for some people.

Talk with your doctor before starting any over-the-counter sleeping pills.

What can I do to help my sleep?

- Go to bed at the same time every night, and wake up at the same time every morning, even on the weekends.
- Start a nighttime routine, do the same thing every night before going to bed.
- Avoid caffeine, smoking, and alcohol for 4-6 hours before bed.
- Avoid large meals before bedtime.
- Use your bedroom only for sleeping and sex. No TV, phone, or eating in bed.
- Make sure your bedroom is dark and quiet.
- If you don't fall asleep in 30 minutes, get up and do something relaxing before going back to bed.