

TREATING INSOMNIA

You have a number of options for treating insomnia, including therapy, medication and supplements, and natural remedies.

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) for insomnia

CBT is usually the first-line treatment for chronic insomnia in adults. In fact, experts have developed a specific subtype of CBT to treat insomnia: **CBT-I**. With support from an online or in-person therapist, you can learn specific techniques to address insomnia, including:

- **Stimulus control.** This technique teaches you to get out of bed and find a quiet and relaxing activity until you feel sleepy, limiting the time you spend lying awake and worrying about falling asleep.
- **Sleep restriction.** This technique first restricts and then gradually increases the amount of time you spend in bed, which can help improve sleep efficiency and sleep quality.
- **Bright light therapy.** This technique involves exposure to bright light in the morning or evening, depending on whether you have more trouble falling asleep or staying asleep.

Your therapist may also offer guidance on relaxation techniques, along with sleep hygiene practices that help you address behaviours preventing you from getting enough quality sleep. They might, for example, recommend you avoid:

- Drinking caffeinated beverages near bedtime
- Eating large or heavy meals or spicy foods close to bedtime
- Getting intense exercise near bedtime
- Using your bed for anything other than sleep or sex

Other approaches

Lifestyle changes and home remedies can often help manage insomnia symptoms. Ideas to try include:

- **Natural sleep aids.** You might try, for example, warm milk, herbal tea, and valerian before bed. Relaxing fragrances like lavender may also offer some benefits.
- **Meditation.** This technique helps promote present-moment awareness and relaxation. It doesn't just help improve sleep quality and make it easier to fall asleep. It can also help relieve stress, anxiety, and pain – any of which might factor into insomnia. Many apps can help you get started with meditation.
- **Acupuncture.** Many people find this traditional Chinese medicine technique, which involves thin needles inserted at pressure points across the body, helpful for easing insomnia symptoms.

Essential oils

Essential oils are strong aromatic liquids made from herbs, flowers, and trees. People often inhale these oils or massage them into their skin to help ease symptoms of various conditions. This practice is called aromatherapy. Choosing the right essential oil can improve your chances of success with aromatherapy.

PREVENTING INSOMNIA

It's not always possible to prevent insomnia, but these tips may help you get the sleep you need:

- Try to maintain roughly the same schedule for sleeping and waking, even on weekends.
- Create a bedtime routine that helps you relax and get in the mood for sleep.
- Limit afternoon caffeine.
- Dim the lights and put down electronic devices an hour or so before bedtime.
- Get some sunlight and physical activity most days or every day, if possible.
- Avoid napping, especially if you know sleeping during the day keeps you awake at night.

SUMMARY

Insomnia isn't just a nuisance or small inconvenience. It's a sleep disorder that can affect mental and emotional health along with physical well-being. If you think you have insomnia, connect with a healthcare professional as soon as possible. They can help you explore possible causes and offer support with finding the best insomnia treatment for your needs.



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PREHABILITATION HEALTH CONDITIONS SLEEPING DIFFICULTIES INSOMNIA

Insomnia refers to a type of sleep disorder. If you live with insomnia, you may:

- Find it difficult to fall asleep, stay asleep, or both
- Wake up from several hours of sleep not feeling refreshed
- Experience fatigue and difficulty functioning throughout the day

Quality sleep plays an important role in overall well-being. Not getting the sleep you need on a regular basis can have a pretty big impact on mental and physical health, not to mention quality of life.

- About a third of all adults report some insomnia symptoms
- 6 to 10 percent of adults have symptoms severe enough to meet the diagnostic criteria for insomnia disorder

CAUSES OF INSOMNIA

Typically, the type of insomnia you experience has a lot to do with the underlying causes of insomnia. Possible causes of acute insomnia, for example, might include:

- Stress
- An upsetting or traumatic event
- Changes to your sleep habits, like sleeping in a hotel, new home, or with a partner for the first time
- Physical pain or illness
- Jet lag
- Certain medications

Chronic insomnia can occur on its own or as a result of:

- Chronic pain conditions, such as arthritis or back pain
- Psychological issues, such as anxiety, depression, or substance use disorders
- Sleep apnea and other sleep disorders
- Health conditions such as diabetes, cancer, gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), or cardiovascular disease

Risk factors for insomnia

Insomnia can affect people of any age or sex, though it most commonly develops in:

- Older adulthood
- Just before, during, and after menopause

Risk factors associated with insomnia include:

- High levels of stress, which might relate to life challenges, financial difficulties, or family and relationship concerns
- Traveling to different time zones
- A sedentary lifestyle
- Varying sleep-wake times or an irregular schedule, which might happen with frequent changes in work hours or shift work
- Taking naps
- Drinking a lot of caffeine
- Alcohol and tobacco use
- Difficulty winding down at bedtime

INSOMNIA SYMPTOMS

You can typically recognise insomnia by the following symptoms:

- Waking too early and finding yourself unable to fall back asleep
- Spending a lot of the night lying awake, worrying you won't fall asleep
- A consistent pattern of interrupted or broken sleep that doesn't refresh you
- Trouble falling asleep after going to bed

As a result, you might begin to experience other symptoms related to lack of sleep, including:

- Fatigue
- Irritability and other mood changes
- Difficulty concentrating or remembering things

TYPES OF INSOMNIA

Experts describe insomnia in a few different ways, depending on its specific characteristics:

- **Acute insomnia** refers to short-term sleeping difficulties that generally last no more than a few weeks.
- **Chronic insomnia** refers to insomnia that affects your sleep for 3 or more days each week on a regular basis, typically for a period of 3 months or longer.
- **Onset insomnia** describes difficulty falling asleep. Trouble getting to sleep might happen as a result of caffeine use, mental health symptoms, or other common insomnia triggers, but it can also develop with other sleep disorders.
- **Maintenance insomnia** refers to trouble remaining asleep once you get to sleep, or consistently waking up too early. This type of insomnia might relate to underlying health and mental health symptoms – but lying awake and worrying you won't get enough sleep can make it worse.

Insomnia can also be primary (idiopathic) or secondary (comorbid). Primary insomnia doesn't stem from any clear cause or existing health or mental health condition. Secondary insomnia, in contrast, relates to underlying causes, including:

- Chronic pain or illness
- Mental health conditions like depression or anxiety
- Shift work
- Certain medications

INSOMNIA AND DIFFERENT GENRES

Insomnia and pregnancy

Insomnia is common during pregnancy, especially in the first and third trimesters. The good news is that pregnancy-related insomnia usually passes and doesn't affect your baby's development. All the same, getting the right amount of sleep is important for your overall well-being.

Insomnia in older adulthood

According to research, up to 75 percent of older adults experience some symptoms of insomnia. A few different factors contribute to insomnia in older adulthood, and these can have something of a domino effect:

- Age-related changes in the circadian rhythms responsible for your sleep-wake cycle can make it harder to fall asleep or stay asleep.
- If you're retired, you may no longer have a consistent daytime schedule or get regular social interaction, both of which can contribute to insomnia.
- Social isolation can contribute to loneliness and increase your chances of experiencing depression, which can also raise your risk of sleep problems.
- Health concerns related to aging, including chronic pain conditions, can also affect your sleep.
- If you're not getting enough sleep at night, you might feel drowsy and fatigued during the day. You might be more inclined to nap as a result. Napping, of course, can leave you less tired at bedtime, fuelling a cycle of sleeplessness.

Insomnia and anxiety

Ever spent a night lying awake worrying about something you couldn't control? Insomnia commonly happens with anxiety, and the link can go both ways. You might find it tough to fall asleep when you can't soothe persistent feelings of worry and fear, for one. But chronic insomnia can leave you anxious about all the sleep you're not getting, not to mention make it more difficult to manage difficult and unwanted emotions during the day. Whether you're dealing with an anxiety disorder or short-term anxiety related to a specific stressor, like a challenging work situation or conflict in your relationship, support from a mental health professional can help you begin to address all of your symptoms. If your insomnia is related to anxiety, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) may be an effective way to manage both conditions (more on this later). You can also take steps to manage milder anxiety on your own by:

- Adding foods that help reduce anxiety to your diet
- Getting some physical activity each day
- Adding relaxation strategies to your self-care routine
- Making time for hobbies and enjoyable activities

Insomnia and depression

Evidence suggests a close link between insomnia and depression:

- A meta-analysis concluded that poor sleep, especially during times of stress, appeared to significantly increase the risk of depression.
- In a recent study involving 1,126 adults who didn't have a diagnosis of either insomnia or depression when the study began, the risk of depression increased as persistent insomnia symptoms worsened over time.

Sleeping difficulties, including insomnia are among the main symptoms of depression. But here's the good news: The same treatments often help both depression and insomnia, no matter which condition comes first. The most common treatments are:

- Therapy, including CBT
- Antidepressants
- Lifestyle changes, including improved sleep habits, regular exercise, and meditation