

# Insomnia

---

*Do you wake up feeling refreshed and energized each morning? Or do you greet each day tired and groggy? If it's the latter, you could have insomnia. But insomnia might not be exactly what you think. And the kind of insomnia you have depends on your symptoms.*

## Different Types of Insomnia

Trouble staying asleep during the night, waking up too early and not being able to fall back asleep and having just generally un-refreshing sleep. If these sleep problems occur sporadically for just a month or so, doctors call it "acute" insomnia. But if they happen regularly over a longer period of time, it's considered "chronic" insomnia.

## What Keeps You Awake?

It can result from triggers like *stress, anxiety, travel, or changes in your schedule*. Your sleep quality can deteriorate to everyday choices, like how much *coffee or alcohol* you drink or how regularly you *exercise*. And poor sleep could have an underlying medical cause, such as a *sleep disorder or depression, anxiety, pain from an injury or arthritis, breathing troubles from allergies and asthma, or gastrointestinal symptoms from heartburn or indigestion*.

## Why You Need to Deal with it.

Over time, acute insomnia can turn into chronic - or "learned" - insomnia. And whether your problems are occasional or chronic, getting adequate sleep is as important to your health as eating a good diet and exercising is. Poor sleep has been tied to everything from weight gain to high blood pressure and heart disease.

## Two Steps to Correct Insomnia.

### **Step 1 - Eat Foods That Promote Sleep**

You will want to eat a nutrient-rich, balanced diet - and try not skipping meals. Eat several small meals throughout the day to keep your energy up and your hunger under control. Certain foods may help set the stage for good sleep, including:

- **Lean protein for serotonin:** Including *lean meats, nuts, beans, milk, and turkey* in your everyday diet will supply your body with the protein building blocks you need to make serotonin -- a sleep-promoting chemical.
- **Quality carbohydrates for tryptophan:** Your body needs quality carbs to help transport sleep-supportive tryptophan to your brain. Try about 200 calories' worth of good-quality carbs -- such as a whole-wheat muffin, a cup of oatmeal, or a small baked potato -- about 30 minutes before bedtime. Just keep the serving size small.

- **Other key nutrients:** Studies suggest that *B vitamins, calcium, magnesium, and omega-3 fats* also may help promote good sleep, **so be sure to include nuts, beans, whole grains, low-fat dairy, and fish in your everyday diet.**

While you are adding quality foods to your diet, **be sure to cut back on these sleep stealers:**

- *Coffee and other caffeine-containing beverages,*
- *Alcoholic beverages and*
- *Strong or spicy foods* that may lead to indigestion.

### **Step 2: Exercise/Flexibility promotes Better Sleep**

*Regular exercise* can help you fall asleep faster, stay asleep better, and sleep more deeply. In a study of adults who had mild sleep problems, the study participants were able to fall asleep faster and sleep for 45 minutes longer simply by exercising for 40 minutes twice a week. Exercise helps set the stage for sleep by reducing your stress hormones and boosting sleep hormones. Include these three types of exercise in your weekly routine:

- **Cardio:** Walk, run, or cycle your way to healthier lungs and a stronger heart.
- **Resistance training:** Lift weights, do push-ups, or work out with an elastic band to build strong muscles.
- **Flexibility:** Try yoga, tai chi, or chi-gong to stretch and breathe your way into a relaxed state.

*One workout suggestion:* Schedule a morning or midday exercise routine. Exercising within 3 hours of bedtime can fire you up and make it difficult to sleep.

### **Ease Your Head and Body**

The first part of good sleep hygiene is to put muscle tension and worries to rest. So whenever you can't let your worries go, you should have a pocketful of quick de-stressors to turn to. They'll help get you ready for sleep, whether you have 5 minutes or a whole hour to spare. Here are some examples:

- Deep breathing
- Meditation
- Guided imagery
- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Massage

### **Making Your Bedroom into a Sleep Friendly Space**

Here's how to create a bedroom environment conducive to sleep:

- Clear the clutter from your bedroom.

- Keep your bedroom on the cool side.
- Spend a little extra on a comfortable mattress, pillows, bedding, and PJs.
- Turn off all sources of ambient light and noise from cell phones, clocks, outdoor lights, heaters, fans, etc.

## **Recommended Behaviors and Environmental Conditions**

Sleep hygiene refers to a list of behaviors that can improve the quality of your sleep. Research indicates that 70% to 80% of people with sleep disorders achieve some benefits when practicing good sleep hygiene.

### ***Behaviors to avoid:***

- *Having caffeine after lunch*
- *Watching TV right before going to bed*
- *Going to bed hungry*
- *Having a big meal*
- *Having alcohol within 6 hours of bedtime*
- *Having a cigarette before bedtime*
- *Going to bed before you are sleepy*
- *Exercising too close to bedtime*

### ***Behaviors to adopt:***

- *Using your bedroom only for sleep and sex*
- *Keeping a regular bedtime and waking time, even on the weekends*
- *Practicing relaxation techniques, such as progressive muscle relaxation, guided imagery, and deep-breathing exercises*
- *Exercising regularly, preferably in the morning or early afternoon*
- *Creating a relaxing bedtime routine (taking a leisurely stroll, soaking in a tub, listening to soothing music, or massaging your legs or feet before bed)*
- *Creating a comfortable environment that is conducive to sleep (eliminating uncomfortable bedding, wearing loose clothing, keeping the bedroom temperature slightly cool, and eliminating any bothersome noise or light)*