

Could Your Sleep Problem Be Insomnia?

What Is Insomnia (in-SAHM-nee-uh)?



Insomnia is a common sleep problem that affects people in different ways. Some people with insomnia have trouble falling asleep at bedtime. Others have trouble staying asleep or wake up too early and can't get back to sleep. As a result, people with insomnia may feel tired during normal waking hours and struggle to complete tasks. Insomnia can be **acute** (lasting for no more than a few weeks) or **chronic** (lasting for months or even years).

What Causes Insomnia?

Many things can lead to insomnia. Here are some common causes:

- Feelings of stress, sadness, or anxiety
- Physical pain or illness
- Health issues that make it hard to breathe during sleep
- An upset stomach or stomach acid
- Too much caffeine or alcohol
- Frequent bathroom use
- Hormone changes
- Shift work
- Side effects of a medicine
- An uncomfortable room or bed
- Noise



People of all ages get insomnia, but your risk is greater if you're older, female, or have people in your family with insomnia. Pregnancy and menopause also increase the risk of insomnia. Sometimes, actions people with insomnia take to feel less tired make insomnia worse, such as napping or drinking coffee.

What Can I Do to Address Sleep Problems on My Own?

Adopt good sleeping habits. Going to bed and getting up at the same time every day is a good start. Try not to nap! Keep your bedroom quiet, cool, and dark while sleeping. In the 2 to 3 hours before bedtime, avoid big meals, drinks with caffeine or alcohol, smoking, or heavy exercise. Also, don't look at screens on television, phones, tablets, or computers for at least 1 to 2 hours before bedtime. Do something that relaxes you before bed. It might be taking a warm bath, listening to quiet music, or reading. When you do go to bed, if you find you can't sleep, get up and do something restful until you feel tired.

When Should I See a Doctor?

If your poor sleep continues and is causing you problems, see your doctor. Your doctor will check for any health issues or use of medicines that could be making it harder for you to sleep. They may ask about your diet, habits, mood, and stress levels.

Your doctor may suggest keeping track of your sleep patterns for a few weeks and refer you to a clinic for a sleep study. If you have had insomnia symptoms for 3 or more days a week for at least 3 months, your doctor may diagnose you with chronic insomnia.

SLEEP TRACKER

MONTH OF _____

DAY	HOURS SLEEP													NOTES
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
1														
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Will Insomnia Go Away Without Treatment?

Acute insomnia often goes away on its own, but chronic insomnia sometimes requires treatment. Untreated chronic insomnia can cause serious problems. Being tired during normal waking hours can lead to accidents, make it harder for you to do your job, or affect your mood. Chronic insomnia has also been linked to health problems like depression, high blood pressure, stroke, heart disease, and diabetes.

How Is Insomnia Treated?



The main treatment options for chronic insomnia are cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia (CBT-I) and medicines. During CBT-I, a trained therapist helps you identify likely causes of your insomnia and teaches you how to manage them. They may also teach you relaxation skills.

If your chronic insomnia symptoms do not improve with CBT-I, ask your doctor about sleep medicines. There are prescription medicines that help people fall asleep, stay asleep, or both. There are also sleep medicines you can buy without a prescription. Most sleep medicines are not meant for long-term use. Your doctor can tell you how they work and explain their side effects.