

# What You Should Know About Insomnia



## Do you sleep soundly every night?

Almost everyone has occasional sleepless nights, perhaps due to stress, heartburn, or drinking too much caffeine or alcohol. Insomnia is a lack of sleep that occurs on a regular or frequent basis, often for no apparent reason. Each person requires a different amount of sleep; however, 7 1/2 hours of sleep per night is about average.

Inability to get a good night's sleep can affect not only your energy level and mood, but your health as well, because sleep helps bolster your immune system. Fatigue, at any age, leads to diminished mental alertness and concentration.

Lack of sleep is linked to accidents both on the road and on the job. Sleeplessness may be temporary or chronic. You don't necessarily have to live with sleepless nights. Some simple changes in your daily routine and habits may result in better sleep.

## Types of Insomnia

**Transient Insomnia** is the inability to sleep well for several nights.

**Short-term Insomnia** is the inability to sleep well for two or three weeks.

**Chronic Insomnia** is the inability to sleep well every or most nights. While many people attribute chronic insomnia to stress, approximately half of cases are secondary to psychiatric condition (depression, anxiety, etc.), and due to physical ailments, such as breathing disorders, periodic limb movements, restless leg syndrome, medication effects, or circadian rhythm (the body's internal alarm clock) disturbances.

## Statistics

- ✓ Insomnia plagues 48% of American adults.
- ✓ The *Sleep In America Poll* by the National Sleep Foundation, finds a direct correlation between the number of diagnosed medical conditions in America's older adults, and the quality of their sleep.
- ✓ More than 40 million Americans complain of chronic insomnia.
- ✓ 80% of those with four or more medical conditions report a sleep problem compared to 53% of those without conditions.

## Causes

Obstructive sleep apnea  
Restless leg syndrome  
Periodic leg movements  
Stress/Anxiety  
Abnormal circadian rhythm

Alcohol  
Heart Disease  
Lung Disease  
Caffeine  
Depression

Prescription and non-prescription drugs  
Pain  
Misuse or overuse of sleeping pills  
Diabetes  
Nicotine  
Poor sleep habits

## Screening and Diagnosis

Insomnia may be difficult to diagnose because of its partly subjective nature and because so many factors can affect your sleep.

Your doctor may ask you questions about your sleep patterns, such as how long you've experienced your symptoms and whether they occur every night. Your doctor may also ask about whether you snore, how well you function during the day, whether you take any medications and whether you have other health disorders. You may be asked to complete a questionnaire to determine your wake-sleep pattern and your level of daytime sleepiness.