

INSOMNIA AND Sleep Hygiene

What is causing my insomnia?

Missing a night or two of good sleep can be normal when experiencing new stress or anxiety. Chronic insomnia (poor sleep for 3 nights/week for at least 3 months) can be caused by things like restless leg syndrome, medications, pain, severe anxiety/depression, stressful life events, dependence on sleep medications, use of alcohol/nicotine/caffeine, or poor sleep hygiene

How does my insomnia affect me?

People who experience insomnia may notice:

- Decreased alertness
- Increased irritability
- Poor work performance
- Poor concentration & memory
- Impaired judgement & reaction time
- Anxiety about sleep
- Decreased mood
- Poor physical coordination
- Relationship conflicts
- Poor quality of life

What are some treatment options?

Simply improving your sleep hygiene using the tips below is often enough to improve your insomnia. Other options include managing stress and anxiety, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, and sleep medications. While medications may be helpful in the short term, they can actually negatively impact your sleep long term.

TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR SLEEP HYGIENE

1. Keep a regular sleep schedule
 - Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, even on weekends!
 - Try including an evening routine (stretching, breathing exercises, herbal tea)
2. Wait until you are tired to get into your bed
3. Don't let yourself toss and turn
 - If you are unable to sleep, focus on deep breathing techniques, box breathing or body scans. If you are still unable to sleep after 20 minutes, try getting up and doing a mindless activity for 30 minutes in low lighting before trying again (folding laundry, reading)
4. No screen use at least 1 hour before bed (If unavoidable at night, use your blue light filter)
5. AVOID the following offenders:
 - Caffeine (coffee, tea, colas, chocolate, some medications) after 2pm, or 11am if sensitive
 - Alcohol (interferes with quality of sleep)
 - Nicotine
 - Naps (try to avoid all together, but if needed should be less than 1 hr, prior to 3pm)
6. Your bed is for sleep and sex – nothing else!
 - Help your body associate your bed with sleep by avoiding its use for things like working, reading, watching TV, eating, paying bills, etc.
7. Temperature – keep your room on the cool side and have blankets available.
 - Try at hot bath before bed – studies have shown that your body cooling down afterwards is associated with sleepiness
8. Food – Eat a well balanced, healthy diet. Avoid being too hungry or too full when trying to fall asleep. If possible, avoid eating 3 hours before bed.
9. Exercise – Regular exercise (150mins/week)
 - avoiding intense/strenuous exercise within 4hrs of sleep
10. Environment – keep your room cool, quiet and dark.
11. Avoid time checking. This can perpetuate anxiety and reinforce cycle of insomnia
12. Try not to opt out of daily activities after a bad night's sleep. This may worsen insomnia.

Patient Resources

Sink into Sleep – Book

www.mynoise.net – Website for sleep sounds

CBT-i Coach, Calm, Healthy Minds Program – Free mobile apps

www.myicbt.com – Free online modules (10) with concurrent CBT