

## **Getting to Sleep**

### ***What Is Insomnia?***

Insomnia is a common complaint among adults. Some symptoms of insomnia are difficulty falling asleep, difficulty staying asleep, and difficulty with early morning awakening. Sometimes insomnia only lasts for a short time and can be easily managed. Persistent insomnia is more troublesome and can affect work, social relationships, and health. Many conditions are associated with insomnia such as depression, anxiety, allergies, and pain. Much of the time insomnia is simply the result of poor sleep habits.

### ***How Is Insomnia Treated?***

Insomnia treatment may include use of an over-the-counter medication or, in severe cases, use of a prescription sedative. It is important to determine the cause of insomnia before treatment begins. Maintaining a sleep diary for one to two weeks is a good way to start. Keeping track of sleep times, caffeine and alcohol ingestion, etc. may provide clues as to the cause of insomnia. Behavioral changes are often all that's needed to improve sleep. By maintaining good sleep habits (sleep hygiene) the need for medication use may be avoided.

## **PRINCIPLES OF SLEEP HYGIENE**

Stick to a regular sleep schedule---even on weekends.

Exercise regularly---avoid exercise in the late evening.

Go to bed only when sleepy.

Put your worries away when you go to bed.

Do something relaxing and enjoyable before bedtime.

Make your bedroom quiet and comfortable.

Avoid large meals just before bedtime.

Use your bedroom only for sleep and sexual activity.

If you can not sleep within 15 to 20 minutes get up and go to another room.

Return to bed only when drowsy.

Remove the clock from eyesight.

Do not nap during the day. If you must nap, limit it to 30 minutes in the early afternoon.

Avoid alcohol, nicotine, and caffeine use.

Avoid frequent use of sedatives.

Schedule outdoor time at the same time each day.

Have your pharmacist check your medications for potential sleep effects.

### ***What If Nondrug Treatment Fails?***

If you are still having difficulty getting a good night's sleep, you should talk to your pharmacist or doctor. The cause of your insomnia will need to be determined and you may need medication to help you sleep. Even if medication is used for insomnia, sleep hygiene principles should still be followed and can provide added benefit.

For additional information on this and other health issues, visit: [MedlinePlus.gov](http://MedlinePlus.gov)