



INSOMNIA

Insomnia is the inability to fall asleep, remain asleep, or sleep restfully through the night, and includes early morning awakening. It can be classified as transient (a few days), short term (no longer than three weeks), or chronic (more than three weeks), and is usually a symptom of another problem, either medical or psychological.

There are certainly many things that can be done for insomnia with conventional medication such as sleeping pills, but I feel it is more advantageous to take a look at some of the alternative methods as noted here.

Herbal therapy

- **Valerian Root – This** is a particularly bad smelling herb, so taken in capsule form over tea is recommended. The drug allays pain and promotes sleep. It is of special use and benefit to those suffering from nervous overstrains, as it possesses none of the after-effects produced by narcotics. Generally I recommend trying one capsule to see how you react to it, and then increase it by a second one if you still need it. It is great for muscle spasms and I recommend this often for back strains. It is known as “nature’s valium”.
- **Kava-Kava** – Although I think of Kava as a good remedy for insomnia, there is a little uncertainty about its safe usage - due to a possible link to liver damage. So I won’t recommend it here.
- **Passion Flower** – This is a common herb used for insomnia and is found in many over the counter herbal sleep remedies.
- **Chamomile** – This can be taken as a tea throughout the day. There are many brands available.
- **Hops** – has a marked relaxing effect upon the central nervous system. It is used extensively for treatment of insomnia. It eases tension and anxiety and may be used for where tension leads to headaches and restlessness.

Nutritional Supplements and Relaxation

- **Calcium and magnesium** - These two minerals are essential for relaxation. When taken at night, they seem to help some individuals fall asleep more readily. A lack of balanced magnesium and calcium in the blood can cause one to wake up at night and not be able to return to sleep.

Aromatherapy

- Chamomile or lavender oils on the temples, on your pillow and on bottoms of feet
- Lavender – in aromatherapy pot

Some other useful tips:

- **Establish a consistent bedtime routine.** This is one of the most important factors in maintaining good sleeping habits. Routines may include taking a warm bath, a relaxing walk in the evening, or meditation/relaxation exercises.
- **Try to go to bed at the same time every night,** and get up at the same time each morning. This includes weekends.
- **Get plenty of exercise during the day.** Studies have shown that people who are physically active sleep better than those who are sedentary. The more energy you expend during the day, the sleepier you will feel at bedtime. Just be sure not to engage in vigorous exercise too close to bedtime as that can actually make it more difficult to fall asleep.
- **Reduce your intake of caffeine,** particularly in the evening.
- **Avoid stimulants like caffeine and limit alcohol.** Both, even when consumed early in the day, can affect sleep.
- **Use your bed only for sleeping and sex.** Don't use it to do work or watch TV.
- **Avoid large meals** late in the evening.
- **If you can't fall asleep** within half an hour of going to bed, get up and read or do something calming until you feel sleepy.
- **Avoid watching late night TV shows** that might cause excitement.
- **Learn and use a relaxation technique regularly.** Breathing exercises, meditation and yoga are good examples.
- **Make sure the temperature** in your bedroom is comfortable.
- **Use “white noise” devices** to block out surrounding environmental noise.
- **Keep the bedroom dark** by using blinds or wearing an eye mask if needed.

- **Take a hot bath before bedtime.** Try a few drops of relaxing oil of lavender in the water.
- **Don't obsess about not sleeping.** Not surprisingly, studies have shown that individuals who worry about falling asleep have greater trouble dropping off. It may help to remind yourself that while sleeplessness is troublesome, it won't kill you.
- **Gaze at a lighted candle for 3 minutes before retiring.**

In addition, there may be some behavioral reasons for chronic insomnia:

- Anxiety about not being able to sleep
- Drinking alcohol before bedtime
- Consuming excessive amounts of caffeine
- Smoking cigarettes before bedtime
- Excessive napping in the afternoon or evening
- Continually disrupted sleep/wake schedule possibly from work schedules or nighttime activities