



INSOMNIA

Brought to you by Stony Brook Wellness and Chronic Illness Program

WHAT IS INSOMNIA?

Insomnia is a difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep, or not feeling refreshed upon waking.

SYMPTOMS OF INSOMNIA

- daytime fatigue or sleepiness
- difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep or awakening before desired time
- forgetfulness
- trouble concentrating
- irritability
- anxiety
- depressed or sad mood
- reduced energy
- increased errors or accidents
- impaired social relationships
- continued worrying about sleep

TYPES OF INSOMNIA

- **Short-term**, or **acute** insomnia lasts from one night up to several weeks.
- **Long-term**, or **chronic** insomnia persists for 3 nights a week or more for at least one month.

WHAT CAUSES INSOMNIA

Short-term insomnia is usually caused by transient stressors, such as:

- job loss, divorce, loss of a loved one
- changes in the sleeping environment
- recent illness or pain
- withdrawal from certain substances such as alcohol or caffeine
- jet lag

The causes of long-term insomnia include:

- medical illnesses, such as those causing chronic stress, pain or breathing problems
- mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety or posttraumatic stress disorder
- medications or drugs
- other sleep disorders such as sleep apnea, restless leg syndrome and circadian rhythm disorders
- poor sleep hygiene
- anxiety about being able to sleep which makes it more difficult to fall asleep next time and creates a vicious cycle
- decreased sleep efficiency with age



TREATMENT

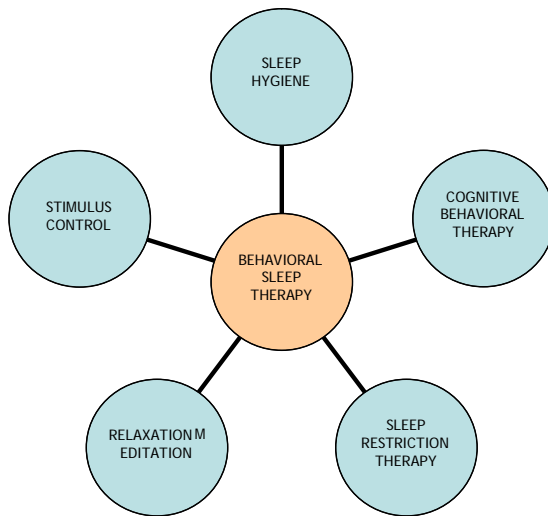
Sleep is crucial for your health, overall wellbeing and safety. Talk to your physician about your insomnia so that he or she can correctly diagnose your sleep disorder and develop a treatment plan. Here are some common types of insomnia treatment.

Types of Treatment

- **behavioral therapy** is an essential component of treatment and should be the first step in treatment in many patients
- **medications** can be added to behavioral therapy by a physician but most sleep medications should not be used for longer than 6 or 8 weeks due to the side effects and high risk of addiction
- **other treatment modalities** such as phototherapy, chronotherapy, herbal remedies, acupuncture, massage, or aromatherapy may be recommended by a physician in addition to behavioral change and medications.

While medications and alternative treatments should be used under the guidance of a healthcare provider, you are the one who should be in charge of the behavioral component of treatment. This handout will give you some guidance on behavioral therapy.

BEHAVIORAL SLEEP THERAPY



Types of behavioral therapy include:

- Sleep Hygiene
- Stimulus Control
- Relaxation/ Meditation
- Sleep Restriction Therapy
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, or CBT

CBT and Sleep Restriction Therapy often require the expertise of a specialist; the other three modules can be self-learned.

Start now to learn Sleep Hygiene, Stimulus Control and Relaxation/Meditation techniques to improve your sleep!

SLEEP HYGIENE

These are the basic guidelines to achieve and maintain a good night's sleep that you can implement yourself.

1. Sleep as much as you need to feel rested, then get out of bed.
 - How much time do we need to sleep? It is different for each person. Most adults need 7-8 hours, some may need 9-10 and some may function well on 5 hours of sleep.
2. Get up at the same time every day, including weekends
3. Maintain a regular relaxing sleep ritual; avoid stimulation by a computer or TV prior to going to bed. Examples of unwinding rituals:
 - Listening to soothing music
 - Lighting candles
 - Taking a warm bath
 - Drinking calming decaffeinated teas
4. Avoid caffeinated drinks after lunch (coffee, most teas, cola)
5. Avoid alcohol before bedtime
 - While alcohol may help fall asleep, it worsens the quality of sleep
6. Avoid nicotine, especially in the evening
7. Do not go to bed hungry, you can have a light snack in the evening but do not eat a big meal before bedtime
8. Create a comfortable sleeping environment: the bedroom should be dark, quiet and slightly cool, minimize clutter.
 - To minimize light you can use a sleeping mask; to reduce noise, try earplugs or a noise machine
 - Do not watch TV or use a computer in your bedroom
9. Keep a regular schedule
 - Regular meal times and other routine activities keep inner body clock running smoothly
10. Try to deal with your worries before sleep
 - It helps to make a list of your problems and how you plan to work on them, but this should be done at least 30 minutes prior to bedtime
11. Have some natural sunlight exposure, preferably at least 20 minutes a day
12. Exercise regularly for at least 20 minutes a day 4 days a week but avoid rigorous exercise 5-6 hours before bedtime
13. Do not look at the clock when you are unable to fall asleep, turn the clock away

STIMULUS CONTROL

Some people with insomnia have learned to associate the bed with staying awake, tension and worrying about being able to sleep. Stimulus control therapy helps to break this association. Here are some tips how to do this.

- 1 Do not go to bed unless you are sleepy.
 - If you are not sleepy at bedtime get up and do some other relaxing activity such as listening to music or reading
- 2 If you are not asleep after 20 minutes (by your own estimate, do not look at the clock), get out of bedroom and return only when you are sleepy
 - You can do something relaxing such as reading, listening to music, try not to watch TV
 - Activities that “reward” you for staying awake should be avoided, e.g. eating, doing housework, watching TV or balancing checkbook
- 3 Avoid taking naps during the day.
- 4 Use bed only for sleep or sex, do not watch TV, use a computer, read, eat or worry while in bed
- 5 Wake up at the same time each morning, including weekends

With this therapy you may not sleep as much the first night but it will help you with subsequent nights.



RELAXATION/MEDITATION

There are two common techniques for relaxation that work for insomnia: progressive muscle relaxation and the relaxation response.

Progressive muscle relaxation

- Beginning with the muscles on the face, contract the muscles gently for one to two seconds and then relax. Continue with jaw and neck muscles, upper arms, fingers, chest, abdomen, thighs, calves and feet. Repeat the cycle for up to 45 minutes if necessary

Relaxation response

- Lie comfortably with eyes closed. Breathe in and out with your abdomen. Focus on your breathing and redirect your mind from everyday thoughts while focusing on the breath, a mental image or a peaceful word.

Adapted from Uptodate. Treatment of Insomnia. M. Bonett, et al, 2010

Other mind-body practices such as breathing techniques, mindfulness, mental imagery, hypnosis, massage, yoga and Tai Chi also improve insomnia.

<http://www.stonybrookmedicalcenter.org/wellness/mindbodyresources/typesofmbp>

Relaxation Tools for Insomnia

- Learn to Sleep Well. Visualizations, music and ocean sounds – the complete aid to a good night's sleep. Chris Idzikowski, Audio CD
- <http://www.healthjourneys.com/category.aspx?catid=37> This is a website with guided imagery audios, specifically we recommend Healthful Sleep CD by Belleruth Naparstek:
http://www.healthjourneys.com/Product_Detail.aspx?id=13&mcid=4&catid
This website provides a free 15-min guided imagery exercise
- Miller, Emmet, M.D. *Easing into Sleep*. An audio available on CD or as mp3 download
<http://drmiller.pinnaclecart.com/index.php?p=product&id=66>
- Rossman, Marty, M.D. *Natural, Restful Sleep*. Audio CD
http://thehealingmind.org/products/index.php?main_page=product_info&products_id=44

SLEEP RESTRICTION THERAPY

People with insomnia try to stay in bed longer hoping “make up” for missed sleep in the morning. This, however, can disrupt circadian rhythm and will make it harder to fall asleep the next night. Sleep restriction breaks this cycle. This therapy is best done with the guidance of a specialist. This is how this technique works.

Step 1 Estimate the average amount of hours you sleep. Decrease your total time in bed to your that estimated amount, it should be no less than four hours

Step 2 Maintain strict bedtime and awakening regimen to only stay in bed this estimated time. Naps are not permitted.

Step 3 Once your sleep efficiency has improved, slowly increase time in bed to improve alertness during the day (by 15 minute increments)

During the first several days or weeks of this therapy you may feel sleepy during the day and may have difficulty concentrating. In this case you might need to avoid sedentary activities to increase alertness.

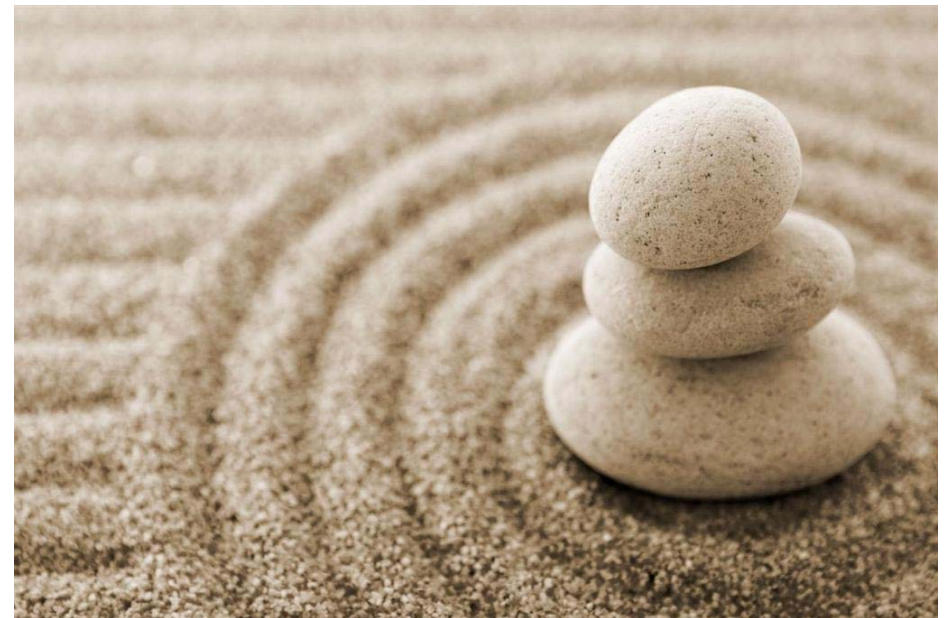
Adapted from M. Bonnet, PhD. *Patient Information: Insomnia Treatments*. UpToDate, 2010

COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY

This approach is usually practiced under the guidance of a therapist. In addition to behavioral steps described, patients learn how their thoughts contribute to their symptoms, and learn to modify these thoughts. Thoughts are often worry thoughts about sleep and performance that lead to a vicious cycle of poor sleep and work.

MORE RESOURCES ON INSOMNIA

- American Academy of Sleep Medicine
<http://www.aasmnet.org/>
- An Online Tutorial about Sleep Disorders provided by Patient Education Institute
- <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/tutorials/sleepdisorders/htm/index.htm>
- National Sleep Foundation <http://www.sleepfoundation.org/>
- The Columbus Community Health Regional Sleep Disorder Center
www.thesleepsite.com
- UpToDate <http://www.uptodate.com/patients/index.html> An online resource that incorporates latest research to provide overviews of medical topics with articles specifically tailored for patients
- National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute
http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/inso/inso_what.html



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