

No More Sleepless Nights



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You're working at your computer and you feel so tired that you can barely keep your eyes open. You are drained, exhausted, irritable and just want some sleep. When it's finally time to get some shut-eye however, you're completely wired—you can't sleep. This is a day in the life of an insomniac.

Insomnia

At some point, everyone will suffer from insomnia during their lifetime. Insomnia is simply defined as the inability to fall asleep. It can be triggered by stress, anxiety, stimulants (caffeine and drugs), disease, pain and so on. Sure it's normal to have trouble getting to sleep if you have an interview or a big presentation the following day. When you have trouble falling asleep on a regular basis, however, you may want to look for help to treat your insomnia.

Solutions for the sleepless nights

You can improve your ability to fall asleep by making lifestyle changes, dietary changes, taking supplements or through simple sleep hygiene. Here are a few tips to help you get some zzzs.

How comfortable are you?

Tip 1: In my patients with insomnia, I often hear reports that they find their beds uncomfortable. Some patients fix the problem by getting better pillows or in extreme cases, by getting new mattresses. In patients who are beginning to sleep with their new partners, I often hear complaints of insomnia as they don't find the bed to be comfortable. In these cases, good communication is not just important for the health, but also to the sleep quality of the relationship.

How is the weather in your bedroom?

Tip 2: You will sleep better if the bedroom is slightly chilly. People complain of difficulties falling asleep when their bedrooms are too warm or stuffy. What about dampness? A study conducted in Sweden found that insomnia is more common in people living in damp buildings.

How is your home environment?

Tip 3: If you suffer from allergies (seasonal, dust, mold, animals), look into improving the quality of your home environment.

Is your bedroom too bright at bedtime?

Tip 4: In order for you to produce the sleep hormone melatonin, you need to sleep in complete darkness. If you see the street lamp from your bedroom window, your room is too bright. A good rule to remember: if you can't see your hand pass in front of your face, the room is dark enough.

Do you take stimulants before going to bed?

Tip 5: Avoid coffee, tea, carbonated drinks with caffeine, chocolate, cigarettes and any other stimulants at least two hours before going to bed.

Do you exercise regularly?

Tip 6: People who exercise regularly tend to fall asleep faster. Be careful, however, when exercising too late at night. In some people, exercise late at night may be too stimulating and it may take a while longer for the body to calm down and sleep.

Are you taking drugs that may interfere with your sleep?

Tip 7: Speak with your licensed health care professional to find out if the medications you are taking are causing you to suffer from insomnia. In many cases, a natural alternative is available that is safe and has minimal side effects.

Are you aware that there are natural products to improve your sleep?

Tip 8: A meta-analysis of 17 studies found that taking melatonin as a supplement improved sleep onset, sleep efficiency and sleep duration. Calming herbs, such as valerian, hops, skullcap and passionflower, are effective in treating insomnia and do not cause drowsiness.

Have you spoken with your naturopathic doctor about your insomnia?

Tip 9: Through natural products, such as herbs, vitamins and supplements, and through acupuncture, your naturopathic doctor can often successfully treat insomnia without using products that cause unpleasant side effects. Studies have shown that acupuncture is effective in treating insomnia in patients recovering from a stroke.