

Natural Lullabies for the Insomniac



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What could be more satisfying than a restful sleep at the end of a long day? What could be more frustrating than lying in bed, unable to fall asleep?

Insomnia

Insomnia is a common sleep disorder. About 50% of the population has had insomnia at some point in time and about 10% of the population suffers from chronic insomnia. Insomnia is defined as having difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep. Insomnia sufferers will most often complain about fatigue, irritability and lack of concentration.

Sleep tips

Insomnia can be treated through changes in sleeping habits. Over the years many of us have developed poor habits when it comes to our sleep. Luckily, with some work and attention, these poor habits can be overcome. There also other methods of helping insomnia sufferers, particularly through complementary and alternative medicine.

The Alternatives

A number of studies have been conducted on the efficacy of complementary and alternative therapies for sleep promotion in critically ill patients. Studies have shown that massage, music therapy and therapeutic touch promote relaxation and comfort in critically ill patients, which likely leads to improved sleep.

White noise

There is increasing scientific evidence that white noise is effective in treating insomnia. White noise, such as ocean waves and rain, has been shown to induce sleep in human newborns and adults. Researchers believe that its effectiveness is due to a reduction of ambient noise. White noise may be a simple, safe, cost-effective alternative to medication.

Melatonin

Another effective treatment for insomnia is melatonin. Melatonin is a hormone produced by the pineal gland of the brain. When secreted into the blood, melatonin facilitates the onset of sleep.

In one study from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), patients received melatonin. The time taken to reach different stages of sleep was recorded using a polysomnograph (an instrument that monitors physiological activity during sleep). In all cases, the patients fell asleep faster than if they had taken a placebo. No side effects, such as drowsiness or a "hang over" feeling, were reported, nor were there any changes in mood or mental performance. The authors concluded that melatonin is a safe and effective treatment option for insomnia sufferers.