

# Good Night, Sleep Tight- What You Should Know About Insomnia

Insomnia is difficulty falling asleep and or staying asleep. Everyone has trouble sleeping sometimes. Poor sleep can cause daytime sleepiness and may cause you to fall asleep at inappropriate times. Consequences of poor sleep include: difficulty sustaining attention, decreased reaction time, difficulty with memory and concentration, increased risk of automobile accidents. A one and one-half hour decrease in sleep can cause a 33% decrease in daytime alertness.

Some prescription medications can contribute to insomnia including: some blood pressure medications (beta blockers, calcium channel blockers), Some asthma medications (bronchodilators, steroids) thyroid hormones, caffeine containing medications and some psychiatric medications. Some over the counter medications can contribute to insomnia including: decongestants, diet pills or supplements and caffeine containing medications. Sometimes adjusting the dose, timing or type of medication you are taking can help resolve or improve insomnia.

Various substances act as stimulants and therefore contribute to insomnia. Alcohol makes you sleepy initially, however several hours later it causes increased alertness. Cigarettes and other tobacco and nicotine products are stimulants. This is another good reason to stop smoking and using other tobacco products. Caffeine is a stimulant. Avoid products with caffeine for the 8 to 12 hours prior to bed time. Caffeine is in coffee, tea, caffeinated soda (Cola, Dr. Pepper, Mountain Dew, some root beers), and chocolate.

## Sleep Schedule

- Establish a regular sleep schedule – always get up at the same time every day (even on weekends or days off), no matter what time you went to bed or what time you fell asleep.
- Cut down on time in bed – limit the hours you spend in bed to 8.5 to 9 hours a night

## Day Time Activity

- Exercise promotes good sleep – exercise about 6 hours before bed time, avoid exercise within a few hours before bed time
- Avoid naps or limit to only one 30 minute nap a day early in the early afternoon.
- Set aside a worry/planning time (15-20min) early in the day to sit quietly and think about all the things you need to do or are worried about. Avoid worrying at bedtime
- Talk a walk in the afternoon to increase light exposure and therefore increase evening alertness.
- Avoid evening caffeine, nicotine or alcohol

## Prior to Bed Time

- Do something relaxing just prior to bedtime – meditation, listening to relaxing music, reading
- Avoid stimulating activity just prior to bedtime.
- Eat a light bedtime snack – avoid going to bed hungry
- Limit liquids at bedtime if you have a problem with getting up to urinate in the night

## Bed Activity

- Only sleep in bed – avoid reading in bed, TV watching in bed, paying bills when in bed, eating in bed, or other activity besides sleeping.
- Avoid TRYING to fall asleep, if unable to fall asleep within 15-20 minutes, get up and do something relaxing in a dimly lit room until you feel your eyes closing and then go to bed, if still unable to fall asleep, get up again and repeat until able to fall asleep within 15-20 minutes of getting into bed.
- Don't look at the clock when you awaken in the night, or can't fall asleep. Turn the clock around or place it in a drawer.
- If you do awaken in the night – don't turn on the overhead light – use a night-light to go to the bathroom if needed.