

Getting a Good Night's Sleep

Treating insomnia

Treatment options include medicines and behavioral therapies. You may have better results if you start with a behavioral therapy. Combine any treatment with good sleep hygiene.

COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY (CBT)

Not sleeping as much as we would like can be a stressful experience. Any stress may stimulate hormones in our bodies that keep us awake. CBT is a program for stress reduction that has been shown to be better than medication for helping people sleep. You can learn about CBT from a counselor, books, or videos. A great self-help book that uses a CBT approach for treating insomnia without using medications is: *Say Goodnight to Insomnia* by Gregg D Jacobs, PhD. For more specific information on CBT, check out the National Association of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy at www.nacbt.org.

MEDICATION

Here are some important facts about most of the medications used for treating insomnia:

- Medicines help you fall asleep 10-20 minutes faster than if you didn't take a sleeping pill
- Medicines give you about 30 minutes of extra sleep each night
- Medicines for sleep generally should not be used for longer than three to four weeks
- Never take a medicine for sleep before driving or doing other things that require you to be alert

Medicines for sleep fall into two general categories. Benzodiazepines (ben-zoh-die-az-uh-peens) are medications such as alprazolam (Xanax), clonazepam (Klonopin), and temazepam (Restoril). Side effects may include sleepiness, headache, dizziness, and nausea. Other concerning side effects include becoming tolerant or addicted, falling, and memory problems. The non-benzodiazepines include medicines such as Lunesta, Sonata, and zolpidem or Ambien. Side effects include sleepiness, headache, dizziness, and nausea. Sleep driving has also been reported.

What if I have depression?

Some medicines for depression such as trazodone and amitriptyline also help you sleep. Talk to your primary care provider if you have depression and trouble sleeping.

What's new with zolpidem?

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) came out with new warnings about zolpidem in January 2013. New information shows that blood levels in some patients may be high enough the morning after use to impair activities that require alertness, including driving. Women appear to be more at risk because zolpidem leaves their bodies more slowly than men.

If you are taking **zolpidem, Ambien, Edluar, or Zolpimist**, the FDA suggests your dose should be no higher than

- **Women:** 5 mg once daily, just before bedtime
- **Men:** 5 or 10 mg once daily, just before bedtime

If you are taking **Ambien CR**, the FDA suggests your dose should be no higher than

- **Women:** 6.25 mg once daily, just before bedtime
- **Men:** 6.25 or 12.5mg once daily, just before bed

Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist if you have questions about your medication.

What about over-the-counter (OTC) medicines?

Medicines you buy without a prescription (called OTC) for sleep contain either diphenhydramine (sometimes known as Benadryl) or doxylamine. If a medicine contains the letters "PM" it usually means the product contains a sleep medicine. Some examples are Advil PM, Excedrin PM, and Tylenol PM. It is probably not a good idea to take these medicines for sleep.

- Sleep problems are often related to other medical conditions. If you take a medicine for sleep without talking to your primary care provider, you may be making your condition worse.
- OTC medicines have side effects that may be dangerous for you, especially if you are older than 60 years or have other health problems.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

American Academy of Sleep Medicine

www.sleepeducation.com

Consumer Reports (click on insomnia)

www.crbestbuydrugs.org

National Library of Medicine

www.medlineplus.gov

Getting a Good Night's Sleep

Advice for insomnia

Insomnia has many causes including stress, anxiety, depression, pain, poor sleep habits, travel, caffeine and many others. If you have insomnia for more than three weeks it is a good idea to see your medical provider to diagnose the problem. This handout will go over some basic information, or **sleep hygiene**, for getting a good night's sleep.

MAKE YOUR BED A PLACE TO SLEEP

Make your bedroom quiet, dark, and a little bit cool. People sleep better if their surroundings are right. If it is too hot, noisy or distracting you may not be able to get a good night's sleep.

If you are not asleep after 20 minutes, get out of bed and do something restful. Find something else to do that will make you feel relaxed. If you can, do this in another room. Your bedroom should be where you go to sleep— it is not a place to go when you are bored. Once you feel sleepy again, go back to bed.

Don't read, write, eat, use computers or other electronics, watch TV, or talk on the phone while in bed.

Don't go to bed unless you are sleepy. Read a book, listen to soft music or browse through a magazine. Find something relaxing to take your mind off of worries about sleep. This will relax your body and distract your mind.

AVOID THINGS THAT MAY KEEP YOU AWAKE

Avoid any caffeine after lunch

Avoid beer, wine, or any other alcohol within six hours of your bedtime

Avoid cigarettes or any other nicotine before bedtime

Avoid going to bed hungry, but don't eat a big meal near bedtime either

Avoid vigorous exercise right before bedtime

From a psychological point of view it is important to associate the bed with sleeping and not with wakeful activities!

OTHER ADVICE

Begin rituals that help you relax each night before bed. This can include such things as a warm bath, a light snack or a few minutes of reading.

Keep a regular schedule. Regular times for meals, medications, chores, and other activities help keep your body clock running smoothly.

Get up at the same time every morning. Do this even on weekends and holidays.

Avoid sleeping pills, or use them cautiously. Most doctors do not prescribe sleeping pills for periods of more than three weeks. Never drink alcohol while taking sleeping pills.

Avoid taking naps. Napping may mess up your sleep-wake cycle. If you must take a nap, try to keep it short (less than one hour). Never nap after 3 p.m.

Try to get rid of or deal with things that make you worry. If you are unable to do this, then find a time during the day to get all of your worries out of your system. Keep a list of things to do so you won't worry about forgetting. Your bed is a place to rest, not a place to worry.

RELAXATION THERAPY

Are you troubled by thoughts or worries that keep you up or wake you up in the night? Does your body feel tense and achy? Relaxation therapy is a method to quiet your mind and relax your body so you can fall asleep more easily. The methods are simple to learn and with patience and persistence, can be very rewarding. For instructions on relaxation visit the Vermont Academic Detailing website: www.vtad.org.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The American Academy of Sleep Medicine (www.sleepeducation.com) is a professional organization with good information about different types of sleep problems and their treatments.

