

Insomnia

What is Insomnia?

Insomnia is a sleep disorder that makes falling asleep, staying asleep or both difficult, waking up too early or experience poor sleep quality, leaving you feeling unrefreshed and having low energy.

Signs and Symptoms

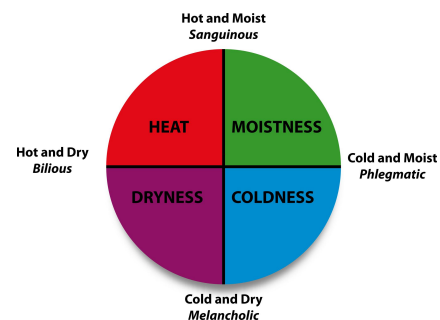
Difficulty falling asleep at night; difficulty staying asleep during the night; waking up too early; feeling unrefreshed and not rested after a night's sleep; lack of physical or mental energy; feeling tired and sleepy during the day; irritability, depression, anxiety; lack of concentration and memory problems; and tension headaches.

What Causes Insomnia?

A number of factors that contributes towards insomnia. Common ones include: **Psychological:** Mental or physical stress, especially anxiety and depression; **Medical Conditions:** over-active thyroid, acid reflux, chronic pain, arthritis and frequent urination. **Poor sleep hygiene:** Mental overstimulation at night, for example from reading books or watching TV; an inappropriate or unsuitable sleep environment; using the bed for activities other than sleep or sex. **Medication:** Regular use of certain antidepressants, anti-histamines, Ritalin, steroids and nasal decongestants. **Stimulants:** Caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol; certain foods and drinks; eating before bedtime or eating a big meal at supper time. Insomnia is also more prevalent with increasing age, as there is a shift in quality towards dryness.

The Tibb View of Insomnia

According to Tibb philosophy the quality associated with the brain is **moistness**. This is essential for the proper conduction of electrical impulses. Insomnia is associated with an excess of **dryness** in the body, especially that of the brain and its nerve pathways. If the weather and living environment are predominantly dry; if there is an excessive intake of spicy foods, meat; or if a high level of mental stress from active thinking at night time exists, then insomnia is most likely to develop. Consuming coffee and caffeinated tea late in the day increases dryness in the body, and these habits predispose the person to insomnia. Although everybody will experience bouts of insomnia sometime in their lifetime, people with a dominant/sub-dominant melancholic or bilious temperaments are most predisposed to it, due to their inherent dominance of dryness.



Management of Insomnia

Treatment and management is aimed at **reducing the excess dryness** associated with insomnia, by implementing Tibb Lifestyle Factors that will **increase the quality of moistness**. This assists Physis in addressing both the symptoms and the causes of insomnia.

Tibb Lifestyle Factors

Food and Drink

- Eat **mostly Hot & Moist foods** - such as banana, sweet potato, and brown bread, **followed by Cold & Moist foods** - like butternut, carrots, pumpkin and pears.
- Eat **less of Hot & Dry foods** - such as avocado, garlic, onion and chickpeas, and the **least amount of Cold & Dry foods** - like beef, tomato, beans and mealie meal.
- Eat a light supper at least three hours before going to bed.
- Avoid alcohol, tea, coffee and tobacco and spicy foods in the late afternoon and evening.
- In the evenings eat bananas, figs, dates, milk, and whole grain crackers. These foods are high in the essential amino acid tryptophan which promotes sleep.
- Avoid bacon, cheese, chocolates, eggplant, potato, sausages, tomatoes and wine close to bedtime. These foods contain the chemical tyramine, which increases the release of nor-epinephrine, a brain stimulant.
- Eat carrots, cucumber and lettuce with plain yogurt in a salad.

Other Lifestyle Advice

- A small amount of alcohol can help induce sleep initially, but invariably disrupts sleep cycles later. While smoking may seem to have a calming effect, nicotine is actually a neuro-stimulant, and can cause sleep problems.
- Avoid taking nasal decongestants late in the day
- Establish a set of habits and follow them consistently to establish healthy sleep cycle.
- Go to bed only when you are sleepy.
- Do not stay in bed if you are not sleepy. Better to get up and read, watch TV, or do something quietly until you are feeling really sleepy.
- Use the bedroom only for sleep and sex, not for iPhones, tablets, reading, working, eating, or watching TV.
- Keep a regular sleep-wake cycle. Try to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day.
- Set an alarm clock and get out of bed at the same time every morning, no matter how you slept during the night. Once normal sleep patterns are re-established, there may be no need for an alarm clock.
- Sleep in a dark, quiet room with a comfortable temperature.
- Do not nap in the afternoon if this isn't a normal thing for you to do. Avoid napping, especially later than later afternoon.
- Keep the bedroom comfortable and quiet. If the room is too quiet, a running fan or quiet background music helps.
- Exercise regularly in the late afternoon or early evening, but not within 2 hours of bedtime. Physical exertion is an excellent way to tire the body, so sleep comes about more easily. Exercising five to six hours before bedtime can help you sleep more soundly.
- Breathe: inhale through left nostril slowly, hold for as long as possible, and breathe out through the mouth slowly. Repeat 5 times.
- Empty the bladder immediately before going to bed.
- Take a hot bath one hour or two before bedtime. For further relaxation, put several drops of soothing essential oils such as lavender or camomile in the bath water.
- Learn to put worries out of your mind by practicing meditation or visualisation.

Herbal Remedy

Drink 1 cup warm milk with 1tsp honey and two pinches of nutmeg powder, 30 minutes before bedtime. Apply lavender oil to the soles of the feet.

