

INSOMNIA

33% of American adults suffer from some level of insomnia, at some point in their lives. Symptoms of insomnia include sleepiness, fatigue, and an inability to concentrate, muscle fatigue, tension, irritability, and depression. Some individuals experience temporary symptoms for a brief period of time. This can be caused from stressful times in our lives. When these situations resolve, when pain is alleviated, or illness is resolved, sleep usually improves. For others the problem becomes long-term.

Insomnia also may result from a variety of medical conditions, or from medications used to treat medical conditions. Depression is often associated with sleep disturbances. Anxiety, an inability to relax, worry and even some psychiatric disorders are associated with sleep disturbances. In the case of worry or anxiety, short-term counseling can be beneficial.

Medical conditions that often cause insomnia-like symptoms are congestive heart failure and emphysema, hyperthyroidism, stroke, or alcoholism. Communicating symptoms of insomnia to your doctor is very important because medical conditions can cause or worsen insomnia. There are several medications that can cause or worsen insomnia, such as antidepressants, bronchodilators, antihypertensives, antivirals, central nervous system stimulants, corticosteroids, antiarrhythmics, decongestants, antibiotics, diuretics, antihistamines, and some anti-inflammatory drugs used for asthma control.

Good sleep habits are very important for insomnia relief. Smoking, alcohol consumption, and exercise can affect whether you get a decent night's sleep. The level of noise, whether you read or watch TV in bed, the temperature of room, the fluids you drink, and the food you eat have an impact on your ability to sleep.

There is treatment for insomnia. Treatment for medically caused insomnia is usually only resolved when the underlying medical condition has been resolved. Depending upon the source of your problems, medication can be used, but an effort to change sleep habits should be attempted first. Ambien can be prescribed and seems to work quickly, without being addictive. When the problem is actually depression associated with insomnia, antidepressants are often used but they may have severe side effects and can be addictive.

Prior to medication, an attempt at habit change can be attempted. Restricting where you sleep to only the bed and not lying awake in bed for more than several minutes can be important. Making the bedroom a dark, relaxing place where no other activities take place, like reading, television watching etc can help. Relaxation techniques are helpful to some individuals. Medications, of course, should only be utilized under a doctor's care. However, if the cause of your insomnia remains unclear or the problem has become long term, a sleep specialist may be necessary.

Chronic insomnia can take a toll on a person's overall health. Studies show an increased mortality risk for those reporting less than either six or seven hours per night. Other studies found that reduced sleep time is a greater mortality risk than smoking, high blood pressure, and heart disease.

If you experience insomnia, it is not a matter to be taken lightly. If your symptoms of insomnia are not resolved with a change in habits, seeking counseling and/or medical attention is important to your health.



For help with your insomnia, call your EAP at 1-888-244-0680.