

Insomnia

A common complaint, insomnia is the inability to sleep or the disturbance of normal sleep patterns. It is difficult to qualify, because everyone has different sleep requirements, and sleeplessness is, in fact, a natural feature of aging. Insomnia is often caused by worry, emotional stress, and exhaustion. Other causes include pain; excess caffeine, alcohol and drugs; food allergy; or sleeping in a stuffy room. Insomnia can also be a symptom of depression.

DATA FILE

In recent years, sleep-disorders medicine has become virtually a new branch of medicine, with centers for diagnosis and treatment now located throughout the U.S.

15-17 percent of the population suffer from sleep problems at some point.

50 percent of people who take sleeping pills for insomnia find the condition worsens.

200,000-400,000 car accidents each year are caused by drowsiness.

Roughly speaking, 80 percent of our sleep is NREM (non-rapid eye movement) and 20 percent is REM (rapid eye movement). If you feel tired all the next day, you have probably not had enough NREM sleep; if you have problems with your memory, then inadequate REM sleep is to blame.

Some 66 percent of people sleep for anything between 6.5 and 8.5 hours each night on a regular basis. Around 6 percent sleep for more than 8.5 hours every night and 18 percent for under 6.5 hours.

Fatigue doesn't necessarily relate to the amount of sleep you have had. Doctors report that one of the most common problems they see in their surgeries on a daily basis is chronic fatigue - or TAT, tired all the time.

Research now shows that some 80 percent of people complaining of being tired all the time (TAT) get adequate sleep, and that the problem lies in nutritional deficiencies which can be cleared up by improving the diet and taking a good multivitamin and mineral supplement.



LOVE Homeopathic chamomile can soothe away cares of the day.

excess caffeine, alcohol and drugs; food allergy; or sleeping in a stuffy room. Insomnia can also be a symptom of depression.

RIGHT To achieve a peaceful sleep, rest on a pillow containing dried lavender.



SYMPTOMS

- overactive mind causing difficulty in falling asleep
- nervousness and restlessness • nightmares once asleep
- irritability • mood swings involving hysterical behavior
- a fear of bedtime may eventually develop

AYURVEDA
• Specific herbs to treat insomnia may include henbane, which is sedative.

CHINESE HERBALISM
• Useful herbs include hoelen, fleecflower stem, and wild jujube. (See pages 71 and 75.)
• The herbalist may suggest that you sleep on a gypsum pillow.

TRADITIONAL FOLK AND HOME REMEDIES
• A hot foot-bath before bed helps relaxation by drawing blood away from the head. Add a little mustard powder to the water to increase the effect. (See page 98.)
• Lettuce is said to encourage sleep. Eat a large leaf about half an hour before bedtime.

HERBALISM
• A warm bath with an infusion of chamomile, catnip, lavender, or limeflowers may be recommended. (See pages 119 and 134.)
• A cup of warm herb tea just before bed will soothe and help you to relax. Try chamomile,

catnip, lemon balm, and limeflowers. (See pages 119 and 134.)
• Make a lavender pillow and place it under your usual pillow.

AROMATHERAPY
• A few drops of chamomile oil, clary sage, or lavender can be added to the bath. (See pages 146-71.)
• Try a gentle massage just before bedtime, with a few drops of chamomile, lavender, rose, or neroli blended into a light carrier oil. (See pages 146-71.)
• Place a few drops of lavender oil on your bedroom light bulb, just before bed, or place a few drops on a handkerchief and tie it to the bed. (See page 161.)

HOMEOPATHY
Remedies can be taken an hour before going to bed, for up to 14 days. Repeat the dose if you wake in the night and cannot get back to sleep. Insomnia is usually treated "constitutionally," so you may need to consult a registered homeopath for treatment. The following remedies may be helpful:
• Coffea, when your mind is overactive, and you are unable to switch off. (See page 192.)

TREATMENT

• Nux vomica, when your sleeplessness is exacerbated by food or alcohol; you wake around 3 or 4A.M., then fall asleep just as it is time to get up; and consequently are irritable during the day. (See page 214.)
• Pulsatilla, when you are restless in the early hours of sleep, feeling uncomfortable, hot and then cold, are not thirsty and sleep with your arms above your head. (See page 209.)
• Arnica, when the bed feels too hard, and you are overtired, fidgety, and dream of being chased by animals. (See page 182.)
• Lycopodium, when your mind is active at bedtime, going over and over work done that day; you dream a lot, talk and laugh in your sleep, and then wake up at around 4A.M. (See page 203.)
• Arsenicum, for when you tend to wake between midnight and 2A.M., feeling restless, worried, and apprehensive. (See page 182.)
• Rhus tox., when you cannot sleep, are irritable, restless, and feel a need to walk about; especially if in pain. (See page 210.)

• Aurum, when you have dreams about dying, hunger, or problems at work, and consequently become depressed. (See page 184.)
• Aconite, when sleep problems are worse after shock or trauma; there is restlessness, nightmares, and fear of dying. (See page 178.)
• Chamomilla, when you are feeling irritable bedtime. (See page 204.)

FLOWER ESSENCES
• Worrying thoughts and mental arguments might respond to White Chestnut. (See page 224.)
• Indecision can be treated with Scleranthus. (See page 239.)
• Stress, strain, frustration, and inability to relax might respond to Vervain or Rock Water, Vine, Elm, Beech, or Impatiens could apply. (See pages 229, 233, 241, 242, and 243.)

VITAMINS AND MINERALS
Increase your intake of vitamins B, C, folic acid, zinc and calcium. Try a calcium supplement just before bedtime. (See page 258.)