

# THINGS PEOPLE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT INSOMNIA

In the Clinic  
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People with insomnia have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep. People with insomnia may feel sleepy during the day, depressed, moody, or have trouble concentrating.

**People do not always know why they have insomnia, but some common causes are:**

- Stress
- Caffeine
- Alcohol
- Depression (insomnia can cause depression, and depression can cause insomnia)
- Changes in work schedules
- Pain or other symptoms from health conditions

Sometimes changing sleep habits is enough to make insomnia better. When other treatments are needed, behavioral treatments are usually better than taking medicines. Behavioral therapies may take 1 to 2 months to help insomnia and need to be kept up even after the insomnia gets better.

**If you have trouble sleeping, try these things:**

- Do not use caffeine, alcohol, and stimulant medications (including some cold and allergy medicines)
- Try to go to sleep around the same time each night and wake up around the same time each morning
- Follow a bedtime routine that helps you relax before bed (reading, listening to music, or taking a bath)
- Do not exercise or eat big meals shortly before bedtime
- Make your bedroom comfortable, quiet, dark, and do not turn on the television or computer

Your doctor may want you to fill out a sleep diary. The diary will help you keep track of when you go to bed, how long you lie in bed before falling asleep, how often you wake during the night, when you get up in the morning, and how well you sleep.

Sleeping pills may only help for a short time, have side effects, and can be unsafe in some people. Sleeping pills should not be used for longer than a few days. Using them regularly can make insomnia worse.

If you have insomnia, see your doctor for help.

## Web Sites with Good Information about Insomnia

**National Heart Lung and Blood Institute**

[www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/insol/](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/insol/)

**American Academy of Sleep Medicine**

[www.sleepeducation.com](http://www.sleepeducation.com)

**Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs**

[www.crbestbuydrugs.org/drugreport\\_DR\\_sleepingpills.shtml](http://www.crbestbuydrugs.org/drugreport_DR_sleepingpills.shtml)