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# Health

A JOURNAL DEVOTED TO HEALTHFUL LIVING

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# WAKING NIGHTMARES : UNDERSTANDING INSOMNIA

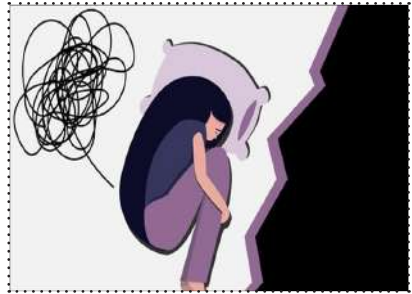
Have you ever wondered what happens when we don't get enough sleep? What can the mental and physical consequences be if our sleep is inadequate? Sleep is important to keep your body functioning at your best. Insomnia is a sleep disorder that makes it hard to stay or fall asleep.

## Introduction:

Insomnia is a state where you find trouble falling or staying asleep. Increased periods of wakefulness, waking up frequently during the night, and taking a long time to fall asleep are signs of insomnia. (1). An average person requires almost 7 to 9 hours of sleep. Sleep habits can vary from person to person.

- Early risers: Some people go to bed at a particular time, and wake up early.
- Night owls: Some people go to bed and wake up late.
- Short sleepers: Certain individuals require less sleep than others. Studies indicate that there may be a genetic reason.

- Infants require 14-17 hours of sleep per day, while adults need 7-9 hours per day.



## Representation of insomnia (Pinterest)

## Causes:

- Tight working schedule: While traveling across multiple time zones, early or late-night shifts can cause disturbances in sleep. This can disrupt your internal clock, known as circadian rhythm that controls your metabolism, body temperature, and sleep-wake cycle.
- Stress: Stressful events in your life such as a chronic illness, death of your loved ones, job loss, or a divorce can cause insomnia.
- Eating a heavy meal before bed

➤ Mental health disorders like anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, etc.(1,4)

➤ Sleep-related disorders like sleep apnea, restless leg legs syndrome, etc.

➤ Disorders like gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), Thyroid disorders, Alzheimer’s disease, etc.

➤ Caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol intake in the late evening can prevent deeper stages of sleep.

### Risk factors:

Age and gender are the risk factors with increased prevalence in women and older adults.

- Insomnia can occur in women during the menstrual cycle and menopause. Hot flashes and night sweats can cause sleep disruption. (1)

- Older adults: As age increases, there is a chance of insomnia due to changes in sleep patterns.

### Types of insomnia: (2)

Idiopathic insomnia	Late insomnia	Middle insomnia
• Chronic insomnia with an underlying biological causes	• Trouble with early morning awakenings	• Trouble in maintaining sleep

### Symptoms:

- Problems with memory/ concentration
- Fatigue
- Feeling anxious or depressed
- Tired/sleepy throughout the day
- Making errors/accidents
- Rising too early in the morning
- Suddenly, waking up during the night
- Interrupted sleep
- Mood changes, and irritation

### Consequences: (3)

- People having insomnia are more susceptible to accidents
- Due to difficulty in concentration, and performing duties, job performance will reduce.

- Increased occurrence of psychiatric disorders such as depression, and anxiety (5)

- Poor emotional, mental and physical health

- Cognitive impairment

- Increased healthcare expenditure

- Increased risk of chronic illness

## **Diagnosis:**

### ➤ **Physical examination:**

A physical examination can be conducted to look for the signs of medical illnesses related to insomnia. A blood test can be indicated to check for thyroid disorders, or other conditions that cause poor sleep.

### ➤ **Sleep study:**

Tests can be performed to analyze body activities while you sleep including breathing, heartbeat, eye movements, body movements, and brain waves.

### ➤ **Reviewing of sleep habits:**

Your healthcare provider may

ask you to fill out a questionnaire to assess your sleep-wake patterns.

## **Treatment:**

Management of stress and medical illness can lead to peaceful sleep. Changing sleep routines, and addressing any issues related to insomnia can help.

### ➤ **Cognitive behavioral therapy:**

This approach is the first-line treatment for insomnia. It helps you to change your beliefs, and tackle negative thoughts that keep you stay awake. The strategies include:

- **Stimulus control therapy:** This technique helps to train your mind, and body to sleep better.

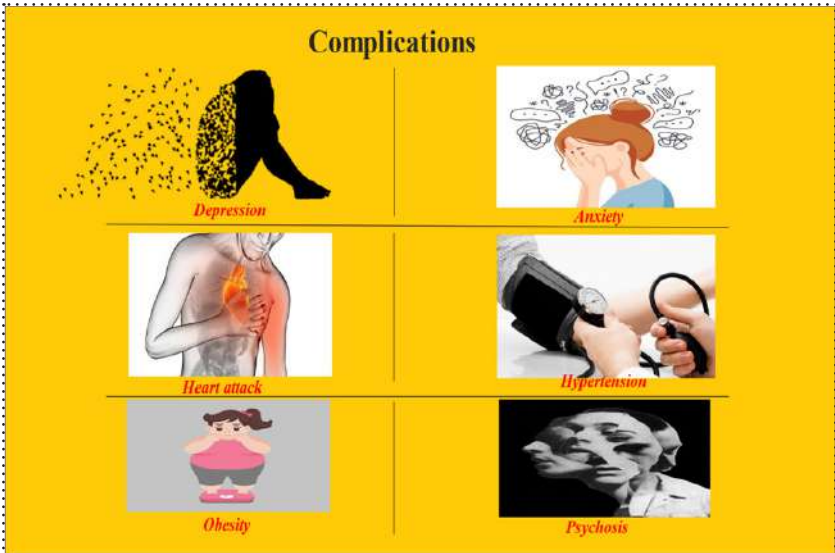
- **Relaxation techniques:** Practicing breathing exercises can lower your anxiety at bedtime.

- **Restricting your sleep limits the time you spend in bed.**

- **Light therapy:** If you fall asleep, or wake up too early, you can expose yourself to light to shift your internal clock.

➤ Medications to treat include antidepressants, antiseizure drugs, melatonin, etc.

## Complications:



## Conclusion:

Proper sleep is essential for the mental and physical well-being of an individual. Lifestyle factors, underlying medical conditions, and even genetic predisposition can cause insomnia. It can impair the body's natural rhythms, and cognitive function. However, adequate sleep, and prioritizing a healthy lifestyle can cure insomnia to an extent.

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