Eight Tips to Help Cure INSOMNIA

Before you reach for those pharmaceutical drugs, try these natural strategies to help you sleep

by Abbas Abedi

Insomnia is described as difficulty in falling asleep or difficulty in achieving continuous sleep. It is not a disease or diagnosis but a symptom. An average person experiences insomnia at least once in their life. As many as 30–50% of all people suffer with insomnia.

All age groups are affected by insomnia. Its incidence increases as age increases, because stress is the most common cause of insomnia. Furthermore, women are more affected by this problem than men.

The best cure for insomnia involves activities that promote sleep, alleviate stress and reduce stimulation. There are several key things that insomniacs can do (or not do) to prepare their body for sleep.

Most importantly, exercise regularly. Studies have shown that regular exercise helps the body with its sleeping problems. Exercise is generally important to attain optimal health, but it is also a key to stress management. It’s best to exercise early in the morning and not immediately before sleeping.

Avoid heavy meals or drinking lots of fluids before going to bed. Large meals could lead to indigestion. Drinking a lot of fluids will increase the incidence of having to get up to urinate in the middle of the night.

Maintain a peaceful and comfortable environment. During bedtime, turn off the lights, turn off the TV, or anything that could create noise, and be sure you are comfortable with the room temperature. These factors affect sleep. Remove the clock from sight because it will contribute to your anxiety and frustration when you can’t fall asleep.

The following are excellent tips to put an end to your sleepless nights.

1. Decrease ingestion of stimulant-containing substances such as tea, coffee, alcohol, sugar, and cigarettes. Stimulants increase alertness, which can affect sleep patterns.

2. Eat a very light carbohydrate snack before bedtime; or better yet, drink warm milk.

3. Take a warm bath 30 minutes to an hour before bedtime. The immediate effect of a warm bath is sedation. Furthermore, warmth relieves body tension. (When the bath is taken more than an hour before bedtime, an arousing effect would occur instead of a sedating one.)

4. Stop watching TV, reading, surfing the web, or engaging in any mind-stimulating activities at least an hour before bedtime. These activities tend to prolong your wakefulness.

5. Use only your bed for sleeping. This will help your body associate your bed with sleep. Thus, when you lie on your bed, it is a signal that it is time to sleep.

6. Engage in relaxation activities: listening to music, deep breathing exercises, meditation, etc. These activities slow down body processes and help the body to relax. Both functions aid the body in falling asleep.

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7. **Clear your mind.** Remove all concerns and worries from your mind. You can do this through writing your thoughts and ideas in a journal. *For some excellent aromatherapy blends to help relieve your tension and help you get to sleep, see the article on page 17.

8. **Do not take naps.** Try to sleep and wake up at the same time everyday. Taking naps will only disrupt your biological clock. On the other hand, sleeping and waking up at the same time will help your body set your biological clock.

Through following these tips, a good night's sleep is very much attainable. Remember that sleep is essential for the body's growth and repair. Insomnia is not something that occurs naturally in your body. Thus, it must be treated. If the above mentioned tips do not cure or even minimize the insomnia or if insomnia is severe or long-term, do not hesitate to consult a doctor.

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