



# **Associated Neurologists, P.C.**

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## *Insomnia*

### **What is Insomnia?**

Insomnia is the inability to fall asleep or stay asleep. Insomnia can lead to daytime tiredness, problems on the job, and moodiness. One in six Americans has insomnia. You may have insomnia if:

- ❖ You have trouble falling asleep.
- ❖ You have trouble staying asleep.
- ❖ You feel that you sleep poorly.
- ❖ You worry about sleep.
- ❖ You try to sleep too hard.

### **Types of Insomnia**

- ❖ **Transient Insomnia.** (The inability to sleep well over a period of a few nights, transient insomnia is usually brought on by excitement or stress.)
- ❖ **Short-Term Insomnia.** (Two to three weeks of poor sleep brought on by continuing stress at work or at home.)
- ❖ **Chronic Insomnia.** (Poor sleep every night or most nights, more than half of all cases of persistent insomnia are caused by physical ailments such as disorders of breathing or muscle activity.)

### **How is Insomnia Treated?**

Insomnia is a symptom of another problem, much like a fever or a stomachache. It can be caused by a number of factors.

- ❖ **Psychological Factors.** These include stress, depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, and other psychiatric disorders. Treatment of the underlying disorder, often including both medication and psychotherapy, can help improve sleep.
- ❖ **Use of Stimulants.** Do not use caffeine, nicotine, or other stimulants close to bedtime.
- ❖ **Use of Alcohol.** Do not drink alcohol within four to six hours of bedtime.
- ❖ **Inactive Behavior.** It may be difficult to sleep at night because of inactivity during the day.
- ❖ **Misuse or Overuse of Sleeping Pills.** If used every night, sleeping pills stop being effective after a few weeks. Cut back gradually on the use of sleeping pills to avoid worsened sleep.
- ❖ **Breathing Disorders.** Breathing problems can rouse a sleeper dozens or even hundreds of times a night. Most cases are mild and do not require treatment. However, severe cases of **sleep apnea** may require medical attention.
- ❖ **Periodic Leg Movements.** Treatment can include pain relieving drugs, evening exercise, a warm bath, or a combination of these. Iron replacement may also be helpful.
- ❖ **Gastroesophageal Reflux.** The backup of stomach acids into the esophagus (heartburn) can be helped by elevation of the head during sleep. Medication can also provide relief.
- ❖ **Pain.** Arthritis, angina, lower, back pain, fibromyalgia, and headache can be relieved by a change in position of pillows, a new mattress, or a change in pre-sleep behavior.
- ❖ Refer to the **Sleep Hygiene** Fact Sheet.