

## **Trouble Staying Fully Charged? Learn About Insomnia**

Occasionally, despite our desire to get the rest we need to be fully alert at work, most of us will have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep. But sometimes, this might last for a number of nights in a row, or even for weeks on end. Have you experienced these sleep challenges on an ongoing basis and been left feeling tired and groggy? If so, then you may be experiencing the symptoms of Insomnia.

### **What is Insomnia?**

Insomnia is defined as having trouble falling asleep or staying asleep, even when you have the opportunity to do so. According to the US National Institutes of Health about 30% of us are troubled by some type of a sleep disruption and Insomnia is one of the most common sleep disorders. Unfortunately, a result of poor sleep is that we experience some level of daytime impairment. Since we all need about 8 hours of sleep each day to fully recuperate our physical and mental abilities, insomnia can reduce both the amount and quality of our sleep, and that may significantly impact our ability to be fully charged.



There are two main types of Insomnia. Primary Insomnia is a physiological issue with our body's sleep system that prevents us from getting normal sleep. Secondary Insomnia is the result of other issues in our lives such as stress, pain or other physical maladies that impact keep us from falling asleep or staying asleep. Most of us will experience a bout of secondary insomnia that lasts no more than a few nights. Once we deal with the issues in our lives, our sleep patterns return to normal. Chronic primary insomnia, however, can happen three nights a week or more and last three months or more. Imagine how poorly you would feel if you just could not get a good night of sleep day after day, week after week. The impacts of insomnia can be quite debilitating.

### **Do I have Insomnia?**

If you have Insomnia you may experience one or more of the symptoms on this checklist:

- I have trouble falling asleep
- I have trouble staying asleep (wake up at night and am not able to fall back to sleep)
- I wake up early in the morning before my normal wake time
- I feel unrefreshed after a night of sleep
- I feel tired and have low energy during the day
- I have difficulty concentrating
- I feel irritable and moody
- I feel impulsive or aggressive
- I am doing poorly at work or at school
- I have difficulty in personal relationships

### **Consequences to Health, Wellbeing and Safety**

A short bout of Insomnia will reduce the quality and/or quantity of your sleep and, therefore, you won't get the sleep that your body and mind need to fully recuperate from the day before. Poor sleep results in what fatigue scientists call a "sleep debt", which will makes you feel fatigued and can reduce your alertness and mental performance.

Insomnia over the long term can lead to additional health consequences such as an increased risk of diabetes, heart disease and stroke, reduced life expectancy, and depression.

Insomnia can have negative impacts on our daytime routines and activity. You may experience very low energy levels or have difficulty staying alert, especially at times when demands for your mental attention are low. These impacts can become safety issues when driving a car, or when there are requirements for us to focus on monitoring something, rather than actively participating in an activity.

### **Diagnosis and Treatment Options**

If you suspect that you may be experiencing long term insomnia that will not resolve itself, then you should speak to your primary care physician or a sleep specialist. These professionals have a variety of methods to diagnose insomnia and develop a treatment regimen that is right for you. You may be asked to keep a sleep log, which is a simple diary of how much sleep you get each night, how well you slept, or fill out a detailed survey about all aspects of your sleep patterns and your personal health and medical history. Blood tests can also help your doctor determine if your insomnia is related to thyroid issues. And your physician may order an overnight sleep study during which a sleep specialist can monitor multiple aspects of your sleep, such as blood oxygen levels, heart rate and breathing patterns, EEG (i.e., brain wave activity) sleep stage readouts, and body movements, to try to determine the cause of your insomnia and establish a treatment plan.



Treating secondary insomnia requires that you work with your physician or sleep specialist to identify any underlying medical issue that is interrupting your sleep and treat that issue first. This should help reduce the associated insomnia. Treating acute insomnia may be accomplished through relaxation techniques and better sleep practices. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is a combined approach that adds positive thinking about sleep to healthy sleep practices and has been clinically proven to be highly effective therapy for insomnia sufferers.

### **Seeking Treatment and Additional Information**

If you think you that insomnia may be affecting your ability to have energy and be alert during your daytime activities, contact your primary care physician and explain your situation. Be prepared to share thoughts about your sleep patterns, how you feel during the day, and any

current medical or other issues you may be experiencing with your doctor. Together you can develop a treatment plan that gets you back on the road to being Fully Charged.

For more detailed additional information on Insomnia, refer to the following web resources:

National Sleep Foundation – Information on Insomnia:

<http://sleepfoundation.org/sleep-disorders-problems/insomnia>

Harvard Sleep Education Program – An Overview of Sleep Disorders:

<http://healthysleep.med.harvard.edu/healthy/getting/treatment/an-overview-of-sleep-disorders>