

## Insomnia

**Overview:** Insomnia is the inability to fall asleep or remain asleep. It is a large problem in our society, but fortunately for most people, insomnia occurs only on occasion. However, for others insomnia can become chronic. Early morning awakening can become a problem resulting in persistent sleepiness during the day. Contributing factors to insomnia consist of:

Change of environment	Drug abuse / alcoholism
Depression	Lack of physical activity
Grieving the death of a loved one	Certain medications
Medical problems	Caffeine consumption
Stress	Excessive noise
Eating late	Improper diet

**Diagnosis:** Insomnia may be related to other health problems, therefore, it is important to tell the doctor about sleep problems. A diagnosis of insomnia is based on:

History	Diagnostic tests
Physical	Sleep lab findings

**Treatment:** Primary treatment is to avoid those elements causing the insomnia. Long-term drugs are not appropriate because they interfere with the body's normal rhythm and over time will decrease the restful function of normal sleep. Because patients begin to feel their sleep is poor, they may take more and more medications, entering a vicious cycle. It is okay to take a sleep-inducing drug on occasion when difficulty sleeping is anticipated, such as a business trip or stimulating vacation.

### **Prevention:**

- Reduce stress.
- Avoid caffeine (especially after dinner).
- Relax two hours before bedtime e.g: read, meditate, journal. Do not go to bed tense.
- Exercise regularly.
- Move your body regularly throughout the day.
- Practice the same routine every night.
- Wake at approximately the same time of day.
- Make a quiet sleep environment.