

Insomnia Fact Sheets

The Description

Insomnia (in-SOM-ne-ah) is a common sleep disorder. People who have insomnia have trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or both. As a result, they may get too little sleep or have poor-quality sleep. They may not feel refreshed when they wake up.

Insomnia can be acute (short-term) or chronic (ongoing). Acute insomnia is common and often is brought on by situations such as stress at work, family pressures, or a traumatic event. Acute insomnia lasts for days or weeks. Chronic insomnia (or Insomnia Disorder) lasts for a month or longer.

Causes

Certain medical conditions, medicines, sleep disorders, and substances can cause insomnia. Emotional disorders that can cause Insomnia Disorder include depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Insomnia Disorder can be a side effect of some medicines. For example, certain asthma medicines, such as theophylline, and some allergy and cold medicines can cause insomnia symptoms. Commonly used substances can also cause insomnia symptoms. Examples include caffeine and other stimulants, tobacco and other nicotine products, and alcohol and other sedatives.

Stress, emotional upset, travel, or other temporary factors can cause insomnia symptoms. But even if these issues are resolved, the insomnia may not go away because of habits that were formed to cope with the lack of sleep. Things like taking naps, worrying about sleep, and going to bed too early can all create an insomnia cycle that is hard to break.

Signs and Symptoms

The main symptom of Insomnia Disorder is trouble falling or staying asleep, which leads to lack of sleep. If you have Insomnia Disorder, you may:

- ✓ Lie awake for a long time before you fall asleep.
- ✓ Sleep for only short periods.
- ✓ Be awake for much of the night.
- ✓ Feel as if you haven't slept at all.
- ✓ Wake up too early.

These difficulties can cause other symptoms. You may wake up feeling tired or not well-rested, and you may feel fatigued during the day. You may also have trouble focusing on tasks. Insomnia Disorder can cause you to feel anxious, depressed, or irritable.

Adapted from US Department of Veteran Affairs "Path to Better Sleep".