

HEALTH AND FITNESS

“Another sleepless night. How will I cope tomorrow?”



This is the question many of us ask ourselves after yet another terrible night's sleep. It is known as insomnia however statistics suggest that you are not alone in the middle of the night even though you think you are.

What is it?

A staggering 30-50% of the general population is affected by insomnia, and 10% have chronic insomnia, a much longer term and serious disorder.

Surprisingly, if you are a woman you have 40% more chance than an man of suffering with some form of insomnia. This may be largely due to hormonal imbalance, pregnancy, and post natal issues and body changes.

There are three types of Insomnia:

1. Transient insomnia (Short Term)
Whereby insomnia is intermittent due perhaps changes in your sleep environment, the timing of your sleep or is caused by stress and anxiety. It can last from a matter of days to weeks. The effects of transient insomnia are understandably sleepiness and impaired

psychomotor performance which affect concentration.

2. Acute insomnia (Medium Term)
This is the inability to consistently sleep well for a period of three weeks to six months.

3. Chronic insomnia (Long Term)
This can last from months to years. This can be affected by other disorders or can be the primary cause.

What are the main causes?

Life Balance.
As we progress into this millennium the stresses and strains of everyday life are most definitely taking their toll on us. Mental health issues caused by demanding pressures of work and home lives have a massive impact on our ability to relax and ultimately sleep. Many sufferers complain about lying awake at

night for hours worrying about what's happened during the day, or what they have to accomplish the following day. Others awake very early in the morning unable to return to sleep however hard they try.

Let us take a look at some of the more common causes of insomnia:

- Hormonal Changes • Natural Aging Stress and Environment • Parenthood Relationship Problems • Work Pressures Work/Home Life Balance • Anxiety and Depression • Life Changes • Illness • Pain

How can I overcome it?

Visit Your GP
Many times people mistake other common sleep disorders for insomnia. This is one reason it is important you visit your GP for a full physical if you have trouble sleeping.



Identify the Cause

Firstly, list the reasons why you think you may be suffering from any type of sleep disorder. The GP will be able to carry out some simple tests and can work with you to help identify insomnia symptoms and the causes for your inability to sleep or stay asleep.

A Sleep Success Story...

John works on shifts. He had sleep problems for years and his job didn't help with the irregular working hours. He lacked routine and was concerned about his weight which was also suffering as a result of erratic shift work.

He first came to me about 6 months ago and I introduced him to some key strategies for conquering his insomnia, some of them are listed below. In addition I used some slightly more detailed

hypnosis and NLP techniques. That was coupled with teaching John self hypnosis and meditation techniques. Within four weeks his sleep was better than it had been when he was a child. What was equally exciting was that, in attacking his sleep problem, he was also affecting his metabolism, the body's speed of burning fat. As he had now given up caffeine, and was sticking to a much more sensible diet, which included eating breakfast and not eating after 6pm every day, he had bags more energy and felt great. This inspired him to begin his exercise regime and the rest is history.

He now sleeps well every night and looks fantastic and has achieved great success by losing nearly 3 stone in 6 months. This proves how important our sleep is to us and the dramatic effects it can have on all parts of our life and body if it is not looked after.

Suggestions which can help you with your sleep patterns

Exercise: One of the greatest ways to overcome insomnia is to ensure you take regular exercise. The brain is therefore regularly releasing endorphins the body's natural opiates, which reduce stress and anxiety. In addition we are burning energy and fat which results in natural tiredness setting in.

Relaxing Techniques: Many people use relaxing CDS or read a book prior to bedtime. This is known as a distraction technique and focuses your mind away from any worries of the day. You can buy relaxation and hypnotherapy CDS which are excellent and have helped many of my clients. Deep Sleep by Glen Harold is in my opinion the best option out there.

Bedtime routine: It is very important to establish a bedtime routine and stick to it. Many people start their routine with a warm night time drink and relaxing bath. They may read for a while before turning off the light at the same time every night.

Bedroom Environment: Make sure that you bedroom is well ventilated so that there is plenty of fresh air circulating in the room. Also, peaceful colour schemes can aid relaxation so if you do suffer with sleeping disorders try decorating your room in calming colours. Spray a mist of fabric freshner on the pillow before you get in bed or

you can purchase room or pillow sprays from many high street chemists.

Caffeine: Caffeine can stay present in the body for up to forty hours after intake, therefore, a cup of coffee drunk at lunch time can potentially impact the next 2 nights sleep. My advice to anyone suffering with insomnia is to give up caffeine altogether and switch to alternatives such as herbal teas which are caffeine free.

Food: Ensure you don't eat anything within four hours of going to bed. Food is the body's fuel and you don't want to be ready for take off just before bedtime.

Cigarettes & Alcohol: Avoid both of these completely before bedtime. They are both stimulants and trigger the body's defence systems that release adrenaline into the body. Nothing could be worse just before bed. In addition the liver will have finished processing the alcohol some hours later which results in early morning waking .4.00AM and an inability to get back to sleep is almost guaranteed.

Make a note: Be prepared for any night time worries and have a notepad by the bed so you can write any worries or to do list for the following day. Close the book and forget about them till the morning.

Sleeping Tablets: Herbal and over the counter tablets such as Nightol can help for short term sleep disruption. They can be purchased in chemists and do help to restore people to normal sleeping patterns.

Your GP may prescribe sleeping medication on prescription. They are very effective and simply work by slowing the communication vehicles in the brain down therefore reducing stress and anxiety. The downside is people can become dependent on them and they can have side effects such as headaches and morning drowsiness.

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