

## FACT SHEET: INSOMNIA

### KEY FACTS

- Insomnia is considered to be a disorder only when it causes a significant amount of distress and anxiety, or when it results in daytime impairment.
- About 30% of adults have symptoms of insomnia.
- About 10% of adults have insomnia that is severe enough to cause daytime consequences.



### Q: WHAT IS INSOMNIA?

**A:** Insomnia is one of the most common sleep complaints and occurs when you experience one or more of these problems:

- A difficult time falling asleep
- Difficulty staying asleep, waking too early and being unable to return to sleep
- Unrestorative sleep, and waking up tired and unrefreshed in the mornings

### Q: WHAT IS THE GENERAL RESULT OF THESE SYMPTOMS?

**A:** People who do not sleep well at night do not function well during the day. Despite having the opportunity for a full night's sleep, poor sleep quality results in complaints of insomnia at night and excessive sleepiness during the day. Sleep deprivation can be a serious problem, and when it is persistent, it is a good idea to get help.

### Q. CAN INSOMNIA VARY IN SEVERITY AND DURATION?

**A:** Yes. Insomnia is categorized based on how long it lasts and the severity of symptoms. People who suffer from insomnia generally fit into two categories: chronic insomnia and acute insomnia.

- Chronic insomnia generally lasts around a month. Most cases of chronic insomnia are secondary to another problem, such as a medical condition, another sleep disorder (like sleep apnea), medications and increased use of stimulants (like caffeine, nicotine, etc.)
- Insomnia is categorized as acute when it lasts three months or longer. It can also be related to life circumstance, e.g., change in job, death in the family, changes in the sleep environment (noise, lighting, temperature), use or withdrawal from medications (particularly stimulant medication), pain, stress or increased urination at night. In most cases, however, acute insomnia is related to sleep disorders like jet lag, shift work or disturbances in the sleep/wake schedule.

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### Q: ARE THERE DIFFERENT TYPES OF INSOMNIA?

**A:** Just as insomnia can be acute or chronic, it is also classified based on the cause as Primary or Secondary:

- Primary Insomnia is not caused by an existing medical, psychiatric or environmental condition.
- Secondary Insomnia may be a symptom of a medical illness, mental disorder, sleep disorder or the use, abuse or exposure to certain substances. In patients who have secondary insomnia, an underlying cause can be identified.

### Q: WHAT ARE POSSIBLE EFFECTS OF INSOMNIA?

**A:** Most people who suffer from insomnia experience moodiness, irritability, lack of motivation or energy, headaches, upset stomach and memory problems. The condition can also lead to an increase in errors at work, work-related accidents, motor vehicle accidents and poor performance in school. The effects of insomnia vary from individual to individual.

### Q: HOW IS INSOMNIA DIAGNOSED?

**A:** Typically, your physician will perform a medical and physical examination and discuss psychiatric history. Sleep habits and history will be evaluated, and you may be asked to complete sleep related surveys, sleep logs or take home a sleep tracking device. A sleep study (polysomnogram) may be suggested if certain sleep disorders, such as sleep apnea, are suspected. Your physician will determine whether an in-lab sleep test or a home sleep test is more appropriate for you, based on your history and other underlying conditions.

### Q: HOW IS INSOMNIA TREATED?

**A:** Since the cause of insomnia varies widely, there is an array of treatment options. In some cases, insomnia may be managed by treating the primary condition causing the problem. For example, if the problem is brought on by environmental changes, insomnia may be managed by practicing good sleep hygiene and making changes to the sleep environment. However, if the insomnia is more acute, short term pharmaceutical intervention may be in order. It is best to discuss treatment options with a physician who is a board certified sleep specialist.

## FURTHER READING

1. <http://www.aasmnet.org/resources/factsheets/insomnia.pdf>
2. <http://www.sleepeducation.com/>
3. <http://yoursleep.aasmnet.org/>