

## **Insomnia factsheet - please discuss your specific issue with your GP**

Insomnia is common and can affect between 10 to 30% of all people at any one time.

### **1. Re-establish the association between bedroom environment and state of rest and relaxation**

- The bedroom is for sleep and sex (no TV watching or book reading)
- Get out of bed at the same time every day (including weekends)
- Only go to bed when sleepy
- If unable to fall asleep within 20 minutes get out of bed and best go to another room until feeling sleepy
- Repeat above until able to fall asleep within 20 minutes
- Try not to do overly stimulating activities during this waiting period - some studies suggest a jigsaw puzzle
- Keep the bedroom dark, use a dim light if needing to get up during the night

### **2. Pre-Bedtime routine**

- Start preparing for sleep about 60-90 minutes before bedtime
- During this time avoid mentally challenging tasks, bright screens (laptop, computer, phone screens)
- Be ready to go to bed when starting to feel sleepy (even if the movie is very interesting!)
- Some studies show that dimming lights may help
- Others suggest having a glass of milk or calming herbal tea may be useful for relaxation
- Try a relaxation strategy to reduce anxiety, control ruminating thoughts

### **3. Lifestyle enhancing better sleep**

- Reduce alcohol especially in the hours before going to bed
- Avoid caffeine later in the day
- Exercise daily but not immediately before bedtime
- During the day try to get some natural sunlight

The body goes through 4-6 cycles of sleep each cycle lasting between 60-90 minutes during the night. Each sleep cycle starts with a short period of drowsiness during which it is easier to fall asleep. Once past this period it becomes difficult to fall asleep during that particular cycle. Do not miss this opportunity as the next opportunity will occur in about 60-90 minutes time but by then frustration often kicks in and makes it hard to fall asleep.

By waking at the same time every day the body will set itself the best time to fall asleep - this is when we feel most sleepy in the evening.

Most people require about 8 - 8.5 hours of sleep per night. However, some require much less, even as little as 4 hours; on the other hand some require 9-10 hours. Most people also tend to sleep 0.5-1 hour longer per night during winter. Find what sleep time works for you.

When older, generally over 70, we tend to wake more during the night and sleep tends to fragment. It becomes common to sleep 5-6 hours per night and then to have a daytime nap of 2 hours or so. It is better to accept this rather than trying to force a "full night's sleep" of 8 hours.

### **Medication**

Most commonly used medication for insomnia are sedative-hypnotics. They disrupt the natural sleep cycle giving unrefreshed sleep, have major side effects (commonly associated with falls risk), and are dependence forming. Some people benefit from the use of melatonin - a hormone that helps induce sleepiness but should be taken about 2 hours before bedtime..

## **Resources**

How to sleep better ebook - [www.re-timer.com/the-product/how-to-sleep-better/](http://www.re-timer.com/the-product/how-to-sleep-better/)

### **Try CBTi - Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Insomnia**

Online:

Managing Insomnia Course: [thiswayup.org.au/courses/managing-insomnia-course/](http://thiswayup.org.au/courses/managing-insomnia-course/)

A Mindful Way to Healthy Sleep: [www.amindfulway.com.au/bettersleep](http://www.amindfulway.com.au/bettersleep)

If still having trouble sleeping consider an online CBTi course or app or see a psychologist specialising in sleep.  
[www.psychology.org.au/Find-a-Psychologist](http://www.psychology.org.au/Find-a-Psychologist)