



Tips for better sleep:

- Maintain a regular time to go to bed and wake up every day
- Only use the bed for sleeping or relaxing
- Create a comfortable, quiet, and dark place for sleeping
- Exercise on a regular basis but not immediately before bedtime
- Do not eat a heavy meal close to bedtime; a light bedtime snack is okay
- Do not take long daytime naps
- Do not lie awake in bed for long periods. If you are not asleep within 20 to 30 minutes of going to bed, get up and do something relaxing until you feel sleepy
- Do not take stimulants that can disrupt your sleep (e.g., caffeine in the evening, tobacco use)
- Do not use alcohol to help you fall asleep. Alcohol may cause an uneven sleep pattern, causing you to wake up during the night
- Do not rely on sleeping pills for extended periods. Long-term use is ineffective for most people with insomnia
- Do not use electronics at least 30 minutes before bedtime

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What is insomnia¹?

Insomnia is when you have a hard time falling or staying asleep. Common symptoms of insomnia include waking up frequently during the night or waking up early in the morning and not being able to get back to sleep. The lack of sleep can negatively affect your energy, mood, health, work performance, and quality of life.

What are some possible causes of insomnia?^{1,2}

- Sleeping environment (e.g., noise, lighting, temperature)
- Disruptive sleep cycle (e.g., jet lag, working a midnight shift)
- Stressors (e.g., loss of a loved one, job loss)
- Caffeinated beverages including coffee or tea
- Medications (e.g., steroids, asthma inhalers, decongestants) or other substances (e.g., cocaine, methamphetamine, alcohol, nicotine)
- Mental health problems (e.g., depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder)
- Underlying health problems (e.g., pain, allergies, heart failure, sleep apnea, restless leg syndrome)

Non-medication therapies to improve your sleep¹

- Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is recommended as a first line treatment for insomnia
- Exercise
- Light therapy
- Mindfulness-based psychotherapy
- Practice good sleep hygiene

Common medications to improve your sleep^{1,3-6}

If non-medication therapies are not helpful, sleep aid medications can be used on a short-term basis. Your provider will select medications based on your type of insomnia (e.g., if you have difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep) and your other health conditions.

Over-the-counter products		
Medication Type	Examples	Important things to note
Antihistamine	Diphenhydramine (Benadryl, common ingredient in combination products such as Tylenol PM, NyQuil, ZzzQuil) Doxylamine (Unisom)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can cause the following side-effects: Daytime sleepiness, dry mouth, blurred vision, and difficulty urinating • Not recommended in elderly patients due to risk of falling and confusion
Dietary or herbal supplements	Melatonin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little evidence to support their effectiveness • Their ingredient, dose, and purity are also not regulated by FDA
Prescription medications		
Medication Type	Examples	Important things to note
Benzodiazepine	Lorazepam (Ativan) Temazepam (Restoril) Clonazepam (Klonopin) Diazepam (Valium) Oxazepam (Serax)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can cause the following side-effects: Memory trouble, daytime sleepiness, risk of dependence, and worsening insomnia upon stopping • Short-term use recommended
Non-benzodiazepine	Zolpidem (Ambien) Eszopiclone (Lunesta) Zaleplon (Sonata)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less adverse effect on the sleep pattern and less risk of worsening insomnia upon stopping • May cause unusual behaviors such as sleep-eating or sleepwalking
Sedating antidepressants	Trazodone (Desyrel)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can cause the following side-effects: Low blood pressure, daytime sleepiness • Priapism (rare) – persistent, usually painful erection of the penis that lasts for more than 4 hours
	Mirtazapine (Remeron)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can cause the following side-effects: Weight gain, daytime sleepiness



Go online to find more information about insomnia and to view the references for this toolkit.

aapp.org/467783

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