

What is Insomnia?



People with insomnia have trouble getting to sleep, staying asleep or waking too early. Insomnia often develops during times of high stress and most people will suffer from insomnia at some point in their lives.

About one in ten Australians have at least mild insomnia at any given time. It is more common in women and elderly people.



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Insomnia Clinic



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DO I HAVE INSOMNIA?

Insomnia is a distressing disorder in which individuals have difficulty going to sleep, staying asleep, or waking too early (generally for longer than 30 minutes). If these symptoms are experienced more than three times per week and for over one month despite spending more than seven to nine hours in bed, it is likely you have insomnia.

Insomnia impacts on daily life causing:

- Lack of energy and increased levels of fatigue
- Irritability
- Poor performance at work
- Memory difficulties
- Concentration problems
- Sleep anxiety and an increased risk of depressive symptoms

Treating insomnia reduces health risks and helps individuals feel better and gain more confidence about sleep.

THE WOOLCOCK INSOMNIA CLINIC

The Woolcock Insomnia Clinic is run by sleep psychologists and doctors who specialise in treating people with insomnia. We offer individual consultations and/or group workshops with insomnia specialists.

INDIVIDUAL CONSULTATIONS

Highly qualified insomnia specialists are available for individual consultations and to assess whether further referral is needed for some other sleep disorder.

INSOMNIA WORKSHOPS

Since COVID we have not been able to run any specialised workshops on insomnia. Our Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) program was developed based on international research and is seen as the gold-standard treatment for insomnia. We have been running workshops and continually updating

the information around sleep and insomnia for over 30 years and are currently working on an online program which will be available very soon. All our psychologists now see clients on an individual basis either via Telehealth or face-to-face.

CBT SESSIONS FOR INSOMNIA

The number of CBT sessions required depends on the individual's specific needs, but most GPs will recommend 6-10 sessions under the Mental Health Care Plan (MHCP).

In **SESSION 1** we usually explore individual history relating to the onset of sleep difficulties. You will also be asked to complete questionnaires relating to sleep and mood.

In **SESSION 2** we explore the many myths surrounding sleep. You will be presented with information about sleep staging, how sleep changes with increasing age, what determines good sleep patterns and the role of light and darkness in resetting sleep with the environment. Individuals will learn how to improve their sleep by doing “sleep things” differently. By the end of the session, you will have a better understanding of how to slowly improve your sleep.

You will also learn how simple relaxation and mindfulness techniques can be used to slow the mind and become part of your daily lifestyle. All it takes is between 20 seconds and three minutes, two or three times a day to help you be more aware of your physical and emotional responses and how these can interfere with your ability to sleep.

SESSION 3 reinforces the need to continue with a number of the behavioural strategies suggested previously. This includes anchoring your sleep to a regular getting up time during the working week and not having so-called “sleep-ins” at the weekend which misalign your sleep with your environment. Enjoying morning light with exercise as often as

possible, learning to “let go” of the day and setting boundaries around your sleep are also important.

The focus of **SESSION 4** will be on becoming more aware of how your current thinking can negatively impact on your ability to sleep. Increasing your awareness of how you think is an important factor when you consider that being “wired” at night makes it very difficult to go to sleep or return to sleep in the middle of the night. Managing your sleep is often about managing your “busy brain” at night. You will develop your own individual sleep program based on what suits you in relation to managing sleep and lifestyle factors.

ONGOING AND FOLLOW-UP SESSIONS

Many individuals develop “sleep anxiety” when they have been dealing with insomnia for any length of time. Nighttime can become very stressful and uncomfortable. Research has shown that untreated insomnia leads to depression and untreated depression leads to insomnia. These mood aspects are a very important part of our treatments, along with lifestyle and relationship issues.

HANDOUTS AND HOMEWORK

All individuals are given a number of booklets relating to healthy sleep habits (including sleep hygiene), relaxation, reducing anxiety and worry, monitoring sleep, strategies involved in changing behaviours, and increasing awareness about unhelpful thoughts linked with poor sleep. Being involved with this program is about making changes.

Associate Professor Delwyn Bartlett, Sleep Psychologist and Insomnia Specialist, has produced a Relaxation CD for people with insomnia. The CD is for sale at the Woolcock Clinic and available at a reduced cost for individuals attending the Insomnia Clinic.

To find out more, go to www.woolcock.org.au/clinic.