

Can't Sleep: Insomnia

People who have difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep, or those who experience poor quality sleep, often are said to suffer from "insomnia." Occasional insomnia affects between 36% and 56% of the adult population. Chronic, ongoing problems with insomnia affect between 9% and 17% of the adult population. People who suffer from insomnia are most likely to be older, and women are more likely to report this problem than men.

People with insomnia commonly report one or more of the following problems:

- Difficulty falling asleep (usually taking 30 minutes or more to fall asleep at night)
- Multiple brief awakenings (sleep fragmentation)
- Long awakenings (awakenings with difficulty returning back to sleep)
- Early morning awakenings (awakening shortly before your desired time)
- Short sleep time (usually getting 6 hours of sleep or less)
- Poor quality sleep



Until recently, insomnia was not considered a significant healthcare problem. However, we now know that insomnia is associated with a number of health concerns that warrant the attention of professionals. Insomnia is associated with impairments in attention, concentration, and memory; impaired quality of life; poor performance in work and school settings; increased risk of accidents and injuries due to fatigue; higher rates of alcohol and substance abuse; higher rates of depression; and more visits to the doctor.

The treatment of insomnia is varied, and can involve the use of medication or certain "non-drug" approaches. There are a number of prescription medications for insomnia that are both effective and safe, and which are not associated with the risk of dependence. Fears of being "hooked" on sleep medication that accompanies the use of older classes of medications are unfounded with newer sleep aids. People with insomnia actually take greater risks when they fail to pursue adequate medical treatment. Non-drug or behavioral treatments are available and have been shown to be effective alternatives to medication therapy. These treatments, while challenging to many, may offer significant relief.

Most people with insomnia do not require overnight evaluation in the sleep laboratory for their problems. Treatment success usually is achieved by working closely with your regular doctor. However, those who have chronic problems that don't get better with conventional medications or therapies may be referred to a sleep center for testing. Approximately one in 10 people with insomnia have an underlying sleep disorder such as RLS, PLMD, or sleep apnea.

For information about insomnia, speak to your doctor. Additional information may be found at www.clinilabs.com, and patient information brochures may be obtained by calling 212-994-5100.

Clinilabs Sleep Disorders Institute is a full-service sleep disorders center, with locations in Manhattan and Westchester, that specializes in the evaluation and treatment of disorders of sleep and wakefulness in adults and children. At the leading edge of clinical service, the Institute provides standards of care not available at other sleep centers. The Institute's main facility is accredited by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, and our offices are affiliated with New York's finest hospitals.