

# MANAGING INSOMNIA THROUGH REGULAR EXERCISE

In partnership with POTENTRx

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## What is Insomnia?

Insomnia is a sleep disorder with the following diagnostic criteria: (1) difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep, or nonrestorative sleep; (2) this difficulty is present despite adequate opportunity and circumstance to sleep; (3) this impairment in sleep is associated with daytime impairment or distress; and (4) this sleep difficulty occurs at least 3 times per week and has been a problem for at least 1 month.

***Chronic insomnia affects approximately 30% of the general population and up to 50% of the elderly population.***

## Know Your Numbers!

### **Q: What is the recommended amount of sleep for adults?**

A: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that adults get 7-8 hours of sleep per night.

### **Q: Why is insomnia considered a disorder?**

A: A disorder is a condition associated with negative consequences that are not a normal result of the condition, but are a result of some sort of pathological response. Those who are diagnosed with insomnia or have insomnia symptoms have more health ramifications than people who suffer from lack of sleep.

### **Q: What are the consequences of insomnia?**

A: The consequences of insomnia are decreased quality of life in these 8 areas; physical ability, ability to perform due to physical health problems, bodily pain, general health perceptions, vitality, social functioning, ability to perform due to emotional health problems, and mental health.

### **Q: Are there other risks associated with insomnia?**

A: Approximately 75%-90% of people with insomnia have an increased risk for other comorbid medical disorders, such as heartburn, pain conditions such as fibromyalgia, and neurodegenerative diseases such as Parkinson's. Also, about 40% of insomnia patients have a coexisting psychiatric condition, with depression being the most common.

### **Q: Is there anything I can do to control my insomnia aside from taking medication?**

A: Yes! There are some modifiable risk factors that contribute to insomnia. Please refer to the reverse side for lifestyle changes that can help to resolve your insomnia.



## Sleep Hygiene *Do's* and *Don'ts*

### Do:

- ▷ Establish a regular bedtime and rise time
- ▷ Exercise in the late afternoon or early evening
- ▷ Take a hot bath a couple of hours before bedtime
- ▷ Establish a comfortable sleep environment (e.g., bed, and bedding)
- ▷ Sleep in a dark, quiet area that is temperature and humidity controlled
- ▷ Establish a relaxing pre-sleep routine that you use every night before sleep, such as washing your face, getting into pajamas, reading or listening to soft music before turning the lights out.

### Don't:

- ▷ Take daytime naps
- ▷ Use stimulants such as caffeine and nicotine
- ▷ Drink alcohol before bedtime
- ▷ Go to bed too hungry or too full
- ▷ Eat offensive foods, such as spicy or acidic foods (e.g., orange juice) before bed
- ▷ Try too hard to fall asleep
- ▷ "Watch the clock"
- ▷ Take prescription and over-the-counter medications that might be stimulating (check with your doctor)

## What Can Lifestyle Changes Do For Insomnia?

There are many proven and recommended lifestyle changes to manage insomnia—the best way to is to use a combination of treatments such as sleep hygiene education (see left), stimulus control therapy, and regular exercise. Examples of stimulus control therapy include lying down to sleep only when you are feeling tired, using your bed solely to sleep, and setting your alarm to get up at the same time every day regardless of the time you went to sleep. If you are unable to fall asleep, get up and go to another room until you feel sleepy. Also, do not nap during the daytime for it disrupts your sleep at night. These lifestyle changes can improve how quickly you fall asleep, your quality of sleep and help improve the quality of your life overall.



## Factors of Insomnia

The following are known to increase risk of developing insomnia:

### Modifiable Risk Factors

Sleep hygiene (depicted above), comorbid medical and psychiatric disorders, lack of physical activity, and substance abuse.

### Non-Modifiable Risk Factors

Gender and age.

## What Can Exercise Do For Insomnia?

Regular aerobic exercise of 120-150 minutes per week is recommended to help combat insomnia. This can be broken up to two twenty minute sessions, 4x week, or one thirty to forty minute session, 4x week. Recommended exercise includes walking, jogging, biking, swimming, or household chores that increase your heart rate for extended periods of time to about 75% of your maximum heart rate. It can take up to 1 to 4 months of regular exercise before noticeable changes are made in sleep behavior.