

# Understanding Insomnia

Montrose Regional Health Sleep Clinic • (970) 240-7101

## Having Trouble Sleeping?

Do you wake up in the middle of the night and have trouble going back to sleep? Lie in bed tossing and turning for hours? Dread going to bed because you know you won't get a good night's sleep? If you answered yes to any of these questions, you may have insomnia.

## What is Insomnia?

Insomnia is a sleep disorder characterized by trouble falling or staying asleep.

## Who is at Risk?

Anyone can have insomnia. However, it is much more common in older adults, women, people experiencing stress, and people with specific medical and mental health issues.



## What Causes Insomnia?

Certain sleep disorders may cause insomnia or worsen it.

**Obstructive Sleep Apnea** — Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA) is a very common sleep disorder. It is characterized by a collapsing of the airway partially or fully while you are sleeping. When your airway collapses, air is unable to get through and you may wake up. Often you won't remember waking up and go back to sleep. It is also possible to wake up and be unable to go back to sleep. Some people with OSA may also have trouble falling asleep at night.

**Restless Legs Syndrome** — Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS) occurs when you feel like you must move your legs. It is also possible to feel a burning or itching sensation in your legs. RLS may make it difficult to go to sleep, and you may wake up feeling tired the next day. Speak with an expert at the MRH Sleep Clinic if you believe you have symptoms of OSA or RLS. Insomnia will vastly improve when these sleep disorders are treated.

## Other Causes of Insomnia

**Depression** — Depression is one of the most common forms of mental illness in the United States. People with depression may have trouble falling or staying asleep. You may have depression if you lack interest or stop enjoying activities that make you happy or feel like you have little energy.

**Pain** — Individuals with chronic pain from another medical issue, such as arthritis or cancer, may have trouble sleeping.

## How is Insomnia Treated?

**Medication** — Medication can be used to address insomnia, with both prescription and over-the-counter options available to help you fall or stay asleep. It's important to discuss any sleep medications you've been prescribed or purchased with your healthcare provider. While modern sleeping pills are effective and safe for treating insomnia, they are generally not intended for long-term use and may have potential side effects. If you wish to stop using sleeping pills, your healthcare provider can guide you through the process safely.

**Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I)** — Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I) is a non-medication treatment aimed at addressing the thoughts and behaviors that disrupt sleep. It helps individuals develop healthier sleep habits by incorporating techniques for stress management, relaxation, and maintaining a consistent sleep schedule. Many people find it beneficial to combine CBT-I with medication. While insomnia is common, most individuals can find an effective treatment that suits their needs.

## Tips to Help With Insomnia

**Limit Caffeine** — Caffeine stimulates the brain and can disrupt sleep. Regular consumption throughout the day may cause difficulties at night. If you're struggling to fall asleep, it's recommended to limit your caffeine intake to no more than 200 milligrams per day, which is roughly the amount in two cups of coffee. Additionally, avoid consuming caffeine after lunchtime.

**Limit Screen Time** — The artificial light from devices like laptops, tablets, or smartphones can disrupt your body's natural signals for sleep. It's best to turn off all electronic devices at least 30 minutes before going to bed.

**Create a Comfortable Sleeping Environment** — Keep your bedroom dark by using blackout curtains or an eye mask. Also, maintain a comfortable room temperature—most people find around 68°F ideal, but adjust it to your preference for optimal sleep.

