



Keep a Sleep Diary

A sleep diary is a record of your sleeping times over a several week period. It includes details about your sleep habits and situations. The diary makes it easier to see what strategies work and what habits might be affecting a good night's sleep.

See a sample sleep diary [here](#).

All in a Night's Sleep

Recognizing and Treating Insomnia

Does it take more than 30 minutes to fall asleep? Do you wake more than 3 times a night? Do you get less than 6 hours of sleep? If you answered yes to these questions, you may suffer from insomnia.

Having trouble sleeping can happen to anyone but it is more common among women, middle-aged or older adults, shift workers, and those with medical conditions.

Insomnia can be acute or chronic. Lasting up to a month, acute insomnia is usually related to a stressful situation, such as an upcoming presentation or the start of a new job. Once the presentation has been given and the new job becomes more familiar, the insomnia often resolves. Chronic insomnia, occurring more than 3 nights a week for at least 3 months, can be caused by:

- Stressful situations. Financial worries, relationship troubles, serious illness or death of someone close, work/school responsibilities, health and other concerns can keep your mind churning into the night.
- Shift work and travel. Working late/early or often changing shifts can disrupt your body's natural sleep patterns. Jet lag

from travel across multiple time zones can do the same.

- Poor sleep habits. Some habits prevent us from getting a good night's sleep. See tips below for improving sleep habits.
- Medical conditions. Chronic pain, restless leg syndrome, hormone imbalances (including menopausal changes), sleep apnea, cancer, diabetes, depression, anxiety, gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease are linked to insomnia.
- Medications. Some medications can interfere with sleep.

Dangers of Sleep Deprivation

Getting 7 to 9 hours of sleep every night is as important to your health as eating well and exercising. During sleep, your body repairs and restores itself. When you don't get enough rest, your body suffers, both physically and mentally. People with insomnia report a lower quality of life than those who sleep well.

Insomnia leaves your brain exhausted, making it hard to concentrate and process new information. This can result in memory problems, reduced productivity, missed time at work or school, and slowed reaction

Large Meals at Bedtime

Won't a full stomach help you sleep?

After a large meal, your stomach can feel uncomfortable. It is also common to experience heartburn or GERD when lying down within 2 hours of eating. Heartburn can make it difficult to sleep. Also, if a big glass of water or milk accompanied that late meal, you are more likely to have to make extra trips to the bathroom, further disrupting sleep.

Best bet: eat your larger meal earlier, have a light snack before bed if needed, and limit drinking to small amounts after 8 pm.

The information contained in this newsletter is for general, educational purposes. It should not be considered a replacement for consultation with your healthcare provider. If you have concerns about your health, please contact your healthcare provider.

times (a risk factor for accidents when driving or crossing a busy street). Sleep deprivation can make you feel sluggish and irritable, and lead to depression, hallucinations, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

Harvard Medical School has reported a link between sleep deprivation and weight gain. Besides a tendency to pass sleepless time with snacking, a lack of sleep lowers your level of leptin, the hormone that tells your brain that you are full, and raises levels of ghrelin, a natural chemical that increases appetite.

Managing Insomnia

If you suffer from insomnia, be sure to discuss your medical conditions with your provider. It may be possible to successfully treat conditions so that sleep isn't disturbed. Developing new habits can also improve sleep, such as:

- Setting a sleep schedule so that your bedtime and wake-up time are about the same everyday (even weekends). Do not nap during the day. Reserve your bed for sleeping and sex only.
- Create a desirable sleep environment by having comfortable bedding, turning off lights and noises you can control, and keeping the temperature on the cooler side.
- Avoid using computers, TVs and smartphones before bedtime. The wavelengths from these devices may disrupt your body's production of melatonin, the hormone that helps regulate sleep.
- Establish a relaxing night time ritual to help signal your body that it's time for sleep. Sip decaffeinated tea or warm milk,

take a warm bath/shower, listen to calming music, or do some light reading.

- Plan regular physical activity on most days to promote healthy sleep, but be sure to finish it a couple hours before bedtime.
- Avoid stimulants like caffeine, alcohol and nicotine several hours (or more) before bedtime. While alcohol can make you drowsy, it can disrupt your sleep cycle after a few hours.
- Check medications to make sure they don't contain caffeine or other stimulants (as do some weight loss products and allergy/cold medications). Ask your doctor if your medications are better taken in the morning.
- Consider counseling to help with managing stress, negative thoughts and concerns that keep you up at night. Biofeedback, yoga, and relaxation training may also be helpful.

Medications, both prescription and over-the-counter (OTC), are available to help people get much needed rest. Since both types of medications have side effects and can become habit-forming, they are best used as short-term treatment options. Prescription sleep medications are usually reserved as a last resort after OTC aids and the above strategies have been tried.

Your KnovaSolutions nurse can provide information about these and other insomnia concerns, including menopausal-related sleep issues, inexpensive OTC sleep aids, and challenges faced by long-distance drivers and others who are required to be alert for long periods of time. Call 800/355-0885, Monday through Friday, 8 am-5 pm, MT.