

Learn to sleep better from the comfort of home!

By Sarah Mosko, PhD (8.9.18)

Nothing is more fundamental to a feeling of well-being than a full night's sleep. Most adults will struggle with insomnia at some point in life, with one in nine suffering impaired life quality from chronic insomnia at any given time. As a psychologist specialized in treating sleep disorders, I am keenly interested in helping individuals with insomnia develop effective strategies for returning to natural, restorative sleep while also acquiring the necessary skills to successfully navigate the problem if it recurs anytime later.

Insomnia is formally defined as dissatisfaction with the amount or quality of sleep occurring three or more times per week. The problem can entail difficulty getting to sleep or staying asleep and/or early morning awakening with inability to return to sleep. In addition, the sleep loss results in emotional distress and/or impairment in important life arenas, such as work, education or family life. Insomnia lasting just a month or two is considered transient, whereas insomnia lasting three months or more is viewed as chronic.

The causes of insomnia are quite varied. Although some people recall having sleep problems even in childhood, as adults the onset is typically associated with some type of life stressor (illness, job loss, new parenthood, divorce, etc.) or onset of a physical sleep disorder like sleep apnea or restless legs that is intrinsically disruptive to sleeping. Elucidating the underlying cause(s) of insomnia requires a detailed sleep history interview and sometimes an overnight sleep study performed in an accredited sleep laboratory or in the home.

Whatever the original trigger for insomnia, the problem can persist long after the original stressor or medical condition is resolved. This is because many of us adopt counterproductive

thoughts and behaviors in response to sleeplessness that only serve to worsen it and, in the end, become learned behavior patterns which endure after the original trigger is long gone. An example is excessive worry about sleeping. Individuals prone to worrying are at greatest risk of developing this type of persistent insomnia, dubbed *learned* or *psychophysiological insomnia*. Upping use of caffeine, alcohol, tobacco, sleeping pills and daytime napping are examples of other counterproductive behaviors.

Sleep loss is serious business when it comes to optimizing our health. Thousands of studies have documented the far-reaching benefits of a full night's sleep. A short list includes longevity, improved mood, weight control, augmented immunity to colds and flu and protection against cancer, diabetes, heart attack and stroke. Historically, over-the-counter and prescription sleep medications have been the go-to answer for insomnia complaints. But recent studies have shown that Cognitive Behavioral Therapy designed specifically for insomnia is (CBT-I) is more effective in the long term. CBT-I addresses directly the counterproductive thoughts and behaviors that perpetuate insomnia.

My face-to-face tele-video treatment program entails CBT-I highly customized to meet your needs from the comfort of your home or office computer. I also screen and arrange appropriate treatment for other sleep disorders that can co-exist with, masquerade as and worsen an insomnia problem. The courtesy 10-minute session I provide allows us both to see if it feels like a good fit. The secure online platform used for all sessions is [Inpathy.com](https://inpathy.com).

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