

What is Insomnia?



People with insomnia have trouble getting to sleep, staying asleep or waking too early. Insomnia often develops during times of high stress and most people will suffer from insomnia at some point in their lives.

About one in ten Australians have at least mild insomnia at any given time. It is more common in women and elderly people.



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Insomnia Clinic



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DO I HAVE INSOMNIA?

Insomnia is a distressing disorder in which individuals have difficulty going to sleep, staying asleep, or waking too early (generally for longer than 30 minutes). If these symptoms are experienced more than three times per week and for over one month despite spending more than seven to nine hours in bed, it is likely you have insomnia.

Insomnia impacts on daily life causing:

- Lack of energy and increased levels of fatigue
- Irritability
- Poor performance at work
- Memory difficulties
- Concentration problems
- Sleep anxiety and an increased risk of depressive symptoms

Treating insomnia reduces health risks and helps individuals feel better and gain more confidence about sleep.

THE WOOLCOCK INSOMNIA CLINIC

The Woolcock Insomnia Clinic is run by sleep psychologists and doctors who specialise in treating people with insomnia. We offer individual consultations and/or group insomnia classes.

INDIVIDUAL CONSULTATIONS

Highly qualified insomnia specialists are available for individual consultations and to assess whether further referral is needed for some other sleep disorder.

GROUP INSOMNIA CLASSES

We are now able to run Group Insomnia classes. Our Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I) programme was developed based on international research and is seen as the gold-standard treatment for insomnia. We have been continually updating the information around sleep and insomnia, based on the latest research. Our Sleep Coach, Tracey Martin runs the group either via Telehealth or face-to-face.

CBT-I SESSIONS FOR INSOMNIA

The number of CBT sessions required depends on the individual's specific needs, but most GPs will recommend 6-10 sessions under the Mental Health Care Plan (MHCP).

In **SESSION 1** we usually explore individual history relating to the onset of sleep difficulties. You will be asked to complete questionnaires relating to sleep and mood and you will explore relaxation strategies/breathing exercises to start your sleep retraining.

In **SESSION 2** we explore the myths surrounding sleep. You will be presented with information about sleep staging, how sleep changes with increasing age, what determines good sleep patterns and the role of light and darkness in resetting sleep with the environment. Individuals will learn how to improve their sleep by re-establishing a healthier sleep routine. Getting a better understanding of healthy sleep practices is a key component of this session.

Relaxation and mindfulness techniques will be further encouraged to make this part of your daily routine. Learning strategies to slow the mind enables you to manage thoughts and feelings better. All it takes is between 20 seconds and three minutes, two or three times a day to help you be more aware of your physical and emotional responses and how these can interfere with your ability to sleep.

SESSION 3 reinforces the need to continue with a number of the behavioural strategies. This includes anchoring your sleep to a regular getting up time during the working week and not having so-called "sleep-ins" at the weekend which misalign your sleep with your environment. Enjoying morning light with exercise as often as possible, learning to "let go" of the day and setting boundaries around your sleep are also important. Exploration into understanding individual circadian rhythms is about realigning your sleep with the environment.

SESSION 4 will increase awareness of your current thoughts and the negative impact they can have on sleep. How you think is an important factor, as many individuals with insomnia are wired and tired at night, yet cannot initiate or return to sleep. Improving your sleep is about managing your "busy brain" at night. You will develop your own individual sleep program based on what suits you in relation to managing sleep and lifestyle factors.

SESSION 5 explores nutrition and exercise which are important factors in improving sleep. In this session we will also recap what has been learned so far and make a plan to manage any future sleep difficulties.

ONGOING AND FOLLOW-UP SESSIONS

Many individuals develop "sleep anxiety" when they have been dealing with insomnia for any length of time. Nighttime can become very stressful and uncomfortable. Research has identified how untreated insomnia leads to depression and untreated depression leads to insomnia. These mood aspects are a very important part of our treatments, along with lifestyle and relationship issues.

HANDOUTS AND HOMEWORK

All individuals are given a number of booklets relating to healthy sleep habits (including sleep hygiene), relaxation, reducing anxiety and worry, monitoring sleep, strategies involved in changing behaviours and increasing awareness about unhelpful thoughts linked with poor sleep. Being involved with this programme is about making changes.

Professor Delwyn Bartlett, Sleep Psychologist and Insomnia Specialist, works with a team of trained sleep psychologists and sleep coaches: Dr. Amelia Scott, Ms. Elle Galgut, Dr. Liora Kempler, and Ms. Tracey Martin.

To find out more, go to www.woolcock.org.au/clinic.