

## Self Test

If you think you may be suffering from sleep-related problems, this Self-Test can help you discuss your concerns with your doctor. Your answers can help your doctor or other qualified healthcare professional to determine if you have insomnia.

How often in a typical week have you been bothered by any of the following problems?

**1. Does it often take you more than 30 minutes to fall asleep at night?**

Not at all  Few days  More than half the days  Nearly every day

**2. Do you wake up frequently during the night?**

Not at all  Few days  More than half the days  Nearly every day

**3. Do you suffer from any or all of the following: Mild Depression, Stress or Low Self-Esteem?**

Yes  No

**4. Do you take over the counter sleep aids to help you get to sleep at night?**

Not at all  Few days  More than half the days  Nearly every day

**5. Do you find it a chore to carry on a detailed conversation?**

Not at all  Few days  More than half the days  Nearly every day

**6. Do your thoughts come more slowly?**

Not at all  Few days  More than half the days  Nearly every day

**7. Has your productivity / grades been slipping over the last sixty (60) days?**

Yes  No

**8. Do you have difficulty staying alert while driving?**

Not at all  Few days  More than half the days  Nearly every day

**9. Do you feel drowsy during the day or during periods of peak activities?**

Not at all  Few days  More than half the days  Nearly every day

**10. When you awaken, do you feel groggy and lethargic?**

Not at all  Few days  More than half the days  Nearly every day

Reference adapted from:  
National Sleep Foundation, 2004  
[www.sleepfoundation.org](http://www.sleepfoundation.org)

## Take The First Step Today

If you are struggling with insomnia, ask your healthcare provider about all of your treatment options. This could be your first step toward a happier and healthier tomorrow.

# Insomnia

**What is the connection between insomnia and your nervous system?**

**Talk to your doctor**



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## Recognizing Signs of Insomnia

Insomnia is a sleep disorder characterized by the inability to sleep and/or to remain asleep for a reasonable period during the night. Sufferers typically complain of being unable to close their eyes or 'rest their mind' for more than a few minutes at a time.

Sleeping problems can include: difficulty falling asleep, easily disrupted sleep, difficulty returning to sleep, waking up too early in the morning, and unrefreshing sleep.

### Types of Insomnia:

#### Transient Insomnia:

Transient insomnia lasts up to one week and often occurs in response to stressful events in a person's life, such as a new job, upcoming deadlines, or exams. In many people it recurs each time stressful events arise.

#### Intermittent Insomnia:

Intermittent insomnia lasts for 1 to 6 months and usually occurs when more serious and ongoing stress is present. This frequently includes extreme mental stress like injury, loss of loved ones, financial crisis, or physical factors like noises, sounds, or uncomfortable sleeping arrangements.

#### Chronic Insomnia:

Chronic insomnia is any insomnia that lasts more than 6 months. People with chronic insomnia frequently have a lifestyle or other medical issues that contribute to their sleeplessness. This includes: chronic pain, frequent headaches, depression and most other mood disorders, many medications, stimulant or alcohol use, sleep apnea, RLS (Restless Leg Syndrome), and shift work.

## Facts about Insomnia

### Sleep Statistics:

A 2005 survey titled "Sleep In America", conducted by The National Sleep Foundation, reported the following findings from recent poll questions related to insomnia.

- 76% of respondents reported experiencing at least one symptom of a sleep disorder a few nights a week or more.
- 73% report daytime sleeping at least 3 times a week.
- 61% report that sleepiness on the job interferes with the amount of work they get done.
- 37% have dozed off while driving.
- 60% have driven while drowsy during the past year.
- 59% experience one or more symptoms of insomnia at least a few nights a week.

**37% have dozed off while driving**

## Sleep Disorders & Neurotransmitter Levels

**Sleep disorders** are among the most common neurotransmitter-related conditions. Others include anxiety disorders, compulsive behaviors, depression, and migraines.

**Neurotransmitters** are chemicals that relay signals between nerve cells, called "neurons." They are present throughout the body and are required for proper brain and body

functions. Serious health problems, including depression and anxiety, may occur if certain neurotransmitter levels are too high or too low.

**Every neurotransmitter** behaves differently. Some neurotransmitters are inhibitory and tend to calm, while others are excitatory and stimulate the brain. Healthcare professionals conclude that specific neurotransmitter imbalances are more likely to underlie certain conditions. Deficiencies involving the central nervous system's neurotransmitter—serotonin and norepinephrine—appear to be involved in the development of sleep disorders. Disruptions in other neurotransmitters, like GABA and glycine, have been more closely linked to anxiety disorders.

**Environmental and biological** factors—including stress, poor diet, neurotoxins or genetics—can cause imbalances in the levels of neurotransmitter chemicals in the brain. These imbalances can trigger or exacerbate insomnia symptoms.

## Improving Treatment

**Most of the drug-based methods** used to treat insomnia include chemicals that either imitate a neurotransmitter or redistribute existing neurotransmitters. Many affect serotonin, and some affect other neurotransmitters like GABA, norepinephrine, or dopamine. It is generally believed that drugs supporting serotonin signaling will be beneficial when insomnia results from a lack of serotonin and that GABA supporting drugs will be effective when a person's symptoms are caused by a lack of GABA. While the idea of matching a drug to a chemical imbalance is generally supported, the vast majority of healthcare providers prescribe psychological drugs based on a patient's symptoms and

few try to match a drug to a biochemical imbalance. This may explain why some drugs are ineffective for some patients.

**Neurotransmitter function** can also be supported with nutrient-based programs. Neurotransmitters are made from various components of food in a normal, healthy diet. Increasing the amounts of these dietary constituents can help maintain normal neurotransmitter levels.

**While no program** can guarantee success for everyone, it is worthwhile to effectively match a drug-based and/or nutrient-based program to the specific needs of the individual.

