



ASK US

Q AND A'S WITH ALEX & JANE - ALFRED HOSPITAL HTC TEAM



I am up late and find it hard to go to sleep at night, what could help me? Sleepless in Shepparton

Dear Sleepless in Shep,
Sleep is so important for people with bleeding disorders, and sometimes the pain, recovery from bleeds can cause you to have difficulties with sleep. About one in three people in general have insomnia at times. "Insomnia is a symptom, not a disease. It means being concerned with how much you sleep or how well you sleep. This may be caused by difficulties in either falling or staying asleep." If you have had sleeping problems for a long time you might benefit from some professional help. You can start by talking to your GP and maybe getting a referral to a sleep disorder clinic.

There are some good simple strategies to help you to improve your sleep. These can be surprisingly challenging as they involve changing your habits and routines, but it is definitely worth giving it your best shot as they can make a huge difference. People keep themselves awake by worrying about going to sleep. Remember that not having enough sleep will not cause you any more harm, and if you can't sleep then if you are resting you are getting some of the benefits of sleep anyway.

Home remedies for short-term insomnia.

Reducing anxiety and sticking to a day-night routine can improve sleep quality. Suggestions include:

- Don't nap during the day.
- Cut down on smoking and drinking.
- Avoid tea, coffee and other caffeinated drinks before bed.
- Don't exercise strenuously before bedtime.
- Do something to relax, such as meditate or have a warm bath.
- Only go to bed if you feel sleepy.
- Go to bed later.
- Stop reading, worrying or watching television in bed and limit your activities in the bedroom to sleeping and sex.
- If you can't sleep, get up, go to another room and do something else until you feel sleepy again.
- Get up at the same time every morning regardless of how much sleep you have had.
- Avoid 'judging' your sleep on a day-to-day basis.

Treatment for long-term insomnia

Insomnia that has persisted for years needs professional support and a lot of patience. It might take some time to re-establish normal sleeping patterns.

Some of the techniques used by a sleep disorder clinic might include:

- A sleep diary, to help pinpoint the pattern of insomnia
- A program of mild sleep deprivation
- Medication to help set up a new sleeping routine
- Exposure to bright light in the morning
- Behavioural therapy.

Your HTC social workers are well placed to support you in working on this issue, so pop in or call and have a talk about what's going on for you.

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References:
<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/sleep-insomnia>