# **Insomnia**

## **What Is Insomnia?**

[Insomnia](https://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/insomnia-symptoms-and-causes) is a [sleep disorder](https://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/default.htm) in which you have trouble falling and/or staying asleep.

The condition can be short-term (acute) or can last a long time (chronic). It may also come and go.

Acute insomnia lasts from 1 night to a few weeks. Insomnia is chronic when it happens at least 3 nights a week for 3 months or more.

## **Types of Insomnia**

There are two types of [insomnia](https://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/rm-quiz-insomnia): primary and secondary.

* **Primary insomnia:** This means your sleep problems aren’t linked to any other health condition or problem.
* **Secondary insomnia:** This means you have [trouble sleeping](https://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/sleep-disorders-faq) because of a health condition (like [asthma](https://www.webmd.com/asthma/default.htm), [depression](https://www.webmd.com/depression/default.htm), [arthritis](https://www.webmd.com/arthritis/default.htm), [cancer](https://www.webmd.com/cancer/default.htm), or [heartburn](https://www.webmd.com/heartburn-gerd/default.htm)); [pain](https://www.webmd.com/pain-management/default.htm); [medication](https://www.webmd.com/drugs/index-drugs.aspx); or substance use (like [alcohol](https://www.webmd.com/food-recipes/rm-quiz-alcohol-myths-facts)).

**You might also hear about:**

* **Sleep-onset insomnia:** This means you have trouble getting to sleep.
* **Sleep-maintenance insomnia:** This happens when you have trouble staying asleep through the night or wake up too early.
* **Mixed insomnia:** With this type of insomnia, you have trouble both falling asleep and staying asleep through the night.
* **Paradoxical insomnia:** When you have paradoxical insomnia, you underestimate the time you're asleep. It feels like you sleep a lot less than you really do.

## **Insomnia Causes**

Primary causes of insomnia include:

* [Stress](https://www.webmd.com/balance/stress-management/default.htm) related to big life events, like a job loss or change, the death of a loved one, divorce, or moving
* Things around you like noise, light, or temperature
* Changes to your sleep schedule like [jet lag](https://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/sleep-travel), a new shift at work, or bad habits you picked up when you had other sleep problems
* Your genes. Research has found that a tendency for insomnia may run in families.

**Secondary causes of insomnia include:**

* [Mental health](https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/default.htm) issues like [depression](https://www.webmd.com/depression/understanding-depression-basics) and [anxiety](https://www.webmd.com/anxiety-panic/default.htm)
* [Medications for colds](https://www.webmd.com/cold-and-flu/cold-guide/cold-medicine-treatment-when-what-how), [allergies](https://www.webmd.com/allergies/default.htm), depression, [high blood pressure](https://www.webmd.com/hypertension-high-blood-pressure/default.htm), and [asthma](https://www.webmd.com/asthma/what-is-asthma).
* Pain or discomfort at night
* [Caffeine](https://www.webmd.com/diet/caffeine-myths-and-facts), [tobacco](https://www.webmd.com/smoking-cessation/stop-smoking-16/break-cigarette-habit/slideshow-tips-quit-smoking), or alcohol use, as well as use of illicit drugs.
* [Hyperthyroidism](https://www.webmd.com/a-to-z-guides/overactive-thyroid-hyperthyroidism) and other endocrine problems
* Other sleep disorders, like [sleep apnea](https://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/sleep-apnea/default.htm) or [restless legs syndrome](https://www.webmd.com/brain/restless-legs-syndrome/default.htm)
* Pregnancy
* Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia
* ADHD
* PMS and menopause

## **Insomnia Risk Factors**

Insomnia affects women more than men and older people more than younger ones. Young and middle-age African Americans also have a higher risk.

Other risk factors include:

* Long-term illness
* [Mental health](https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/mental-health-making-diagnosis) issues
* Working night shifts or shifts that rotate

## **Insomnia Symptoms**

Symptoms of insomnia include:

* Sleepiness during the day
* [Fatigue](https://www.webmd.com/women/guide/why-so-tired-10-causes-fatigue)
* Grumpiness
* Problems with concentration or memory