



Insomnia - Searching for Sleep and an Insomnia Cure

Roger Elliott

Although there are many different sleep problems, insomnia is by far the most common. Insomnia is characterised by problems in falling asleep, waking during the night or early in the morning. Most of us will at some time during our lives suffer from insomnia to some degree. Most insomnia will cure itself, however sometimes it can persist for long periods, or become so bad that the person can feel like they're not sleeping at all.

Later we'll look at one possible [insomnia cure](#), but first it's important to understand about sleep itself.

Different types of sleep

Sleep is not one uniform phenomenon. It comes in different 'flavours', if you like. Firstly, we have slow wave sleep (SWS) which is divided into stages 1, 2, 3 and 4; stage 4 sleep being known as deep sleep. The best-known aspect of sleep is of course dreaming which occurs mostly in Rapid Eye Movement sleep, or REM. This state is unlike other sleep stages as the brain is very active, so much so that it has been called 'paradoxical sleep'.

The need for sleep

Although we are not yet sure of all the benefits sleep brings, several points are clear.

1) REM sleep is essential for [emotional health](#). Dreaming has the function of ridding the emotional centres of the brain of unfulfilled emotional arousal from the previous day, thus leaving us more able to cope well with the next day's emotionally arousing incidents(1).

When we don't get enough REM sleep, we can often feel a bit 'hyperactive'. REM is suppressed by alcohol - you may have noticed the effect of being a bit 'wound up' the day after a heavy night's drinking. This is due, in part at least, to the fact that you have not dreamed enough. You can imagine what happens if we constantly under-dream. Click here for more information on [dreaming](#). Anti-depressants also suppress REM sleep.

2) Slow wave sleep is essential for rejuvenation of physical processes. The exact ways in which this happens are as yet unclear, but we do know that the immune system

benefits from a good night's sleep. A reduction in sleep of 2 hours per night has been shown to reduce the number of natural killer cells (disease fighters) by as much as 20%.

3) Extreme sleep deprivation can cause highly unpleasant and bizarre effects such as loss of balance, memory and even hallucinations. So we can see that a good night's sleep is not a luxury; it is an absolute necessity.

Why are sleep problems so common?

Sleep can be disrupted easily for many of us as it requires progressive [relaxation](#) in order to take place. Therefore anything that raises our adrenaline levels, or causes us to [worry](#), can interfere with the natural process of sleep. Some people seem to be able to 'switch off' the day's worries and can sleep in any environment. For others, sleep seems to be much more delicate.

Sleeping pills - a real 'Insomnia Cure'?

When you haven't slept for days, the thought of 'sweet oblivion' is extremely attractive, and who can blame those of us who choose a fail-safe option like a sleeping pill? In the long run however, they can lead to more problems. Sleeping pills impair quality of sleep and often have other side-effects such as anxiety and disorientation.

So what can be done about insomnia in the long-term?

When a person has chronic insomnia it is almost as if they have 'forgotten' how to sleep properly, or that they have become conditioned to responding to the sleep situation (i.e. bedtime) with [anxiety](#) or irritation instead of relaxation. What often needs to happen in these circumstances is a 're-training' of the mind and body in achieving the state necessary for sleep to occur.

The difficulty with sleep is that the harder you try to sleep, the less likely it is to happen. This means we need to approach it in a different way. Rather than going directly for the goal, we need to 'set the scene' so that natural sleep processes can take place by themselves.

The Hypnotic Insomnia Cure [Deep Sleep Programme](#) is a complete 're-training' package for people with insomnia or sleeping difficulties.

reference (1) See ['The Origin of Dreams'](#) by Joe Griffin

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